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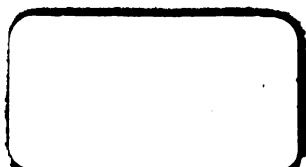


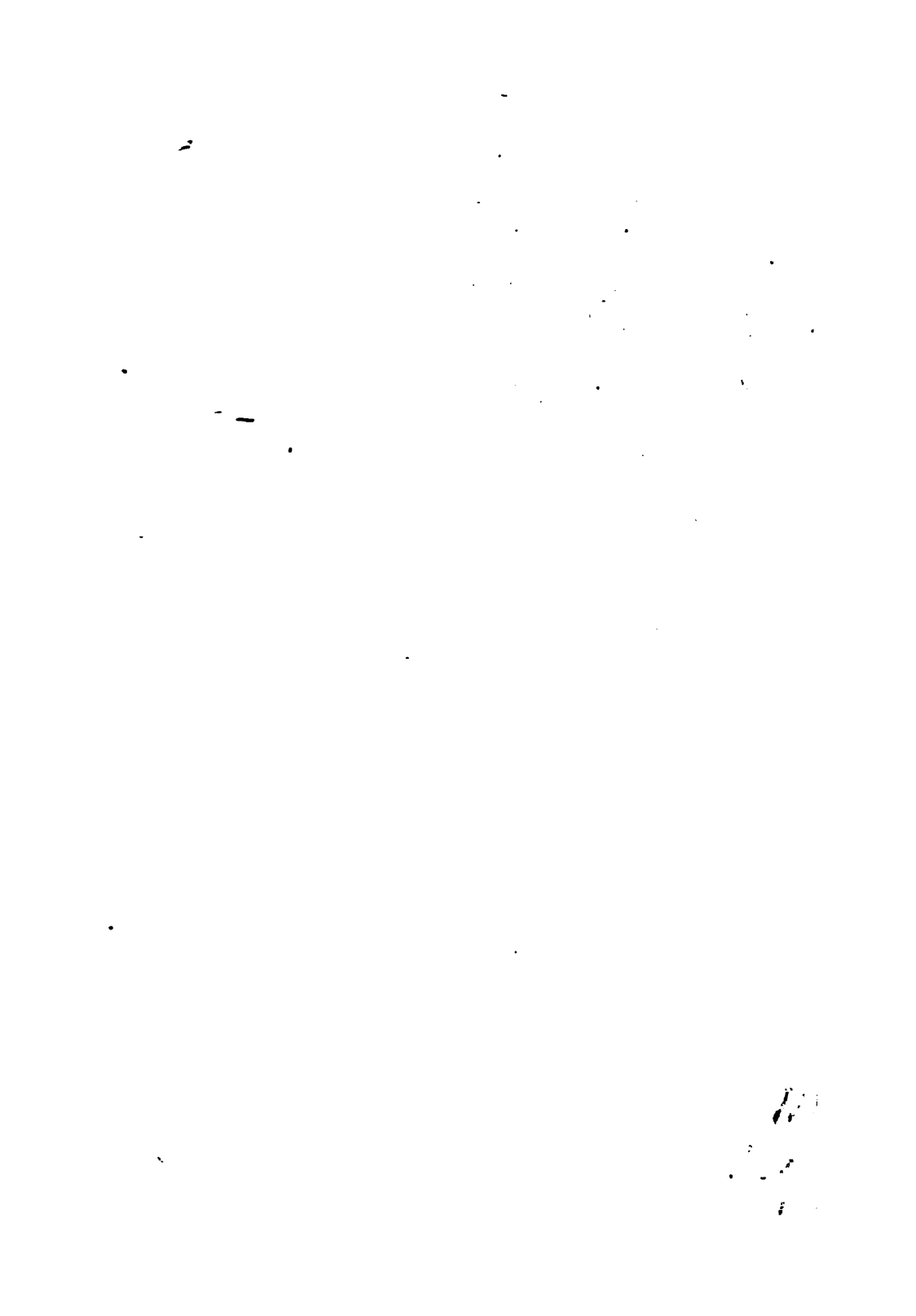
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BOOKS XIII.-XXIV.

Homer

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THE
ILIA D OF HOMER

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE IN
THE SPENSERIAN STANZA

BY
PHILIP STANHOPE WORSLEY, M.A.
FELLOW OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD

VOL. II.
BOOKS XIII.-XXIV.

TRANSLATED BY JOHN CONINGTON, M.A.
CORPUS PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Εἰς οἶκον ἀριστος, ἀμύνασθαι περὶ πατρὸς.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXVIII



TO

THE REV. EDWIN PALMER, M.A.,

TUTOR AND LATE FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD,

THIS ATTEMPT

TO COMPLETE THE WORK OF A COMMON FRIEND

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

IN judging of this work, it will be right to take into account the circumstances under which it has been produced. It is primarily intended as the completion of a monument which a valued and lamented friend was raising to his own honour. When Mr Worsley began to foresee the fatal termination of his last illness, one of his regrets was that he should not live to finish a translation which he regarded as a not unsuccessful attempt to embody his conception of Homer's poetry. As I was sufficiently conversant with his version, so far as it extended, having revised two-thirds of it in the proof-sheets, and frequently corresponded with him on matters connected with it, it occurred to me to consider whether I might not possibly be able to do for him, however unworthily, what he was so soon to be prevented from doing for him-

self. My first trial almost made me repent of the temerity of the thought : eventually, however, I accomplished a few stanzas (the first six of the Eighteenth Book), which I submitted to him along with the proposal which they were intended to introduce. He expressed himself as more than willing that I should undertake the task ; and accordingly, soon after his death, I began the work which I now offer to the public. Perhaps I may be thought to have performed it too hastily : but the occasion was one where haste was of some importance ; nor do I believe that, by taking time for greater elaboration, I should have succeeded to any appreciable degree in realising more completely the ideal which I had before me.

My first object, I need not say, has been to make this volume acceptable to the readers and admirers of Mr Worsley's own work. When I at first contemplated the undertaking, I expected that I should be in some degree editor as well as author, that he would have left behind him something to which my translation might form a supplement. Twelve stanzas of the Thirteenth Book, however, proved to be all that he had accomplished. They are those which appear first in the

volume ; and I have printed them exactly as they stand in his fair copy, though there is one place, in Stanza 4, which, had he been living, I should have asked him to reconsider. I am not sure how he meant it to be understood, though in any case it seems to involve a mistranslation—a fault, however, the appearance of which he was not always careful to avoid, if he thought he had adhered to the general spirit and feeling of a passage. In this as in other critical matters I frequently disagreed with him, my own view of the licence allowed to a translator being less liberal than his, possibly because I could not realise as he could the sense of freedom which a genuine poet feels. If he had been living he might have changed the passage, or even accepted a substitution of my own ; but as he could no longer be appealed to, it was clearly not in my province to introduce any such substitution. In my own composition I have been guided to some extent by a similar feeling. When he had established a practice with regard to anything definite and tangible, I did not feel myself at liberty to depart from it, even in a case where I had argued with him against the practice. The only

instance I can recall is scarcely worth quoting, but it may serve to illustrate my meaning; the use of the word "hut," instead of "tent," which he thought necessary to give a true impression of the dwellings of the Homeric warriors during a ten years' siege. In other and more flexible matters, while working generally on the outlines laid down by him, I have been guided by my own sense of fitness. This has especially been the case with regard to that to which I adverted just now, closeness of translation. He felt that he could trust himself, from time to time, to depart from the language of his author, without the danger of substituting anything which his author would have been unwilling to acknowledge. I could entertain no such confidence in my own case, and though the exigencies of the Spenserian stanza have not always allowed me to be as faithful as I could wish (a point on which I shall have more to say presently), the liberties which I have taken have been comparatively few, and in most instances taken unwillingly. On the other hand there are various particulars, chiefly affecting the rhythm of lines and the structure of stanzas, where I have become a convert in practice to

doctrines against which I used to contend in theory. After all, however, I need scarcely affect to be afraid that the reader will be seriously disturbed by any differences that may exist between my version and Mr Worsley's in circumstantial details. My deviations from his form would trouble me little if I could flatter myself with the belief that I had preserved his spirit.

On the whole, I can truly say that I have felt but few of the restraints which might have been expected to shackle one who was working on a plan laid down by another. I remember that when the first volume of Mr Worsley's *Odyssey* was originally announced, I was inclined to doubt the applicability of the Spenserian stanza to a translation of Homer ; but on reading the book I soon found that my critical theories had been disposed of by the practical argument of success. That the measure of Spenser has certain advantages for such a purpose, some of them peculiar to itself, is at once evident. The *Faery Queen* is the only English narrative poem of any length which makes the same sort of impression on the ordinary reader as a literary work as is made by the Homeric epic. Chaucer may in some respects be

a better parallel to Homer, philologically and poetically; but centuries of neglect have made Chaucer's language a puzzle, and his rhythm a problem. Cowper saw a resemblance between Milton's manner and Homer's; but modern judges will pronounce it far less Homeric than Virgilian. The early ballad poetry is too brief and occasional to supply a model for the translation of a long and organised poem. Spenser's genius and Homer's may have differed profoundly; but the similarity of their literary manners is quite sufficient to give a translator the key-note he requires, even though he may not seek to reproduce in detail either Spenserian rhythm or Spenserian diction. There is an advantage in the ten-syllable line to one who aims, however imperfectly, at line-for-line translation. The Alexandrine would no doubt be more convenient still; but the Alexandrine, in spite of Drayton's attempt to naturalise it, does not exist in English as a measure to be employed consecutively. The fourteen-syllable line is in general too long, as any reader of Chapman may see; and the same objection (not to mention others of a different kind) applies yet more forcibly to the

English hexameter. But ten syllables of English will mostly express as much, or nearly as much, as fifteen or sixteen of Greek, except in the case of that most inconvertible of currencies, proper names ; while the stated recurrence of the Alexandrine operates as a relief in emergencies. Lastly, there is the character of the stanza itself, which, though in no way resembling the Homeric hexameter, is well suited, as other authors beside Spenser have shown, to a poem in "the grand style," while it is far more tractable to most writers than blank verse, or even than the heroic couplet.

The difficulties which the stanza presents to a translator are, I need hardly say, first, its rhymes, secondly, its incommensurability with the structure of the original. With regard to the first, however, I have on the whole been agreeably disappointed. I do not say, of course, that I have not often had to vary the expression for the sake of the rhyme ; but in general I have found the four rhymes which constitute the knot of the stanza unexpectedly manageable. I have been driven, indeed, to ring the changes on certain sets of sounds oftener than I could have wished ; but

there is some consolation in thinking that such recurrences of monotony are not altogether out of keeping with that tendency to repetition and to the use of epic commonplace which has often been noted as a salient literary feature in Homer. Like Mr Worsley, and indeed like Spenser himself, I have not always been at the pains to provide four distinct sounds for my four rhymes; but the instances of this kind of laxity will be found to be very few. No doubt a translator of Homer has some advantage in a search for rhymes; writing in an incondite style, he may use whole classes of expressions from which a more cultivated artist would be debarred; by adopting, for example, the "feeble aid" of the expletive auxiliary, he may double his stock of past tenses; writing in a semi-archaic style, he may appeal to a literary consciousness, which, being past, cannot openly gainsay him, and hazard phrases which, though they are not idiomatic, look as if they might once have been so. At any rate, however the fact may be accounted for, it is not, I think, in the matter of rhymes that the Homeric translator will be made particularly sensible of the difficulty of Spenser's stanza.

The second difficulty, the irreducibility of Homer's narrative to paragraphs corresponding in length to nine-line stanzas, is a much more serious one. Generally, as I have said, I believe Homer may be rendered into English line for line, with but trifling loss ; and supposing this to be practicable, there can be little doubt that it is desirable, as the character of the Greek, like that of all poetry, depends in no small degree on the manner in which the lines are divided, and to alter the mode of division is to alter the movement. But whether line-for-line rendering or some other type of representation is the translator's ideal, the difficulty of the Spenserian stanza is the same, involving as it does the necessity of pausing in places where, if he had to think merely of his duty to the original, he would not naturally pause. Mr Worsley met this difficulty in three ways ; by expanding the original, by contracting it, and by disregarding the pause and running stanza into stanza. Either way, if pursued exclusively, would be fatal to the success of the work, either as a translation or as a poem ; but, employed by turns, they relieve each other, and, in his hands at any rate, produce a compromise

which may satisfy both the poetical reader and the student of the Greek. Which of the three should be adopted in a particular case will depend on minute considerations, such as it would be tedious to enumerate here ; but a few words may be allowed on the expedients themselves. Perhaps the most hazardous of the three is expansion, at least to a translator who has no confidence in his own original powers. Where it could be avoided, I have always shrunk from it : I have been sorry when I have been obliged to stretch seven lines of the Greek into nine of my own English ; and the instances where I have made a stanza out of fewer than seven of Homer's lines are very rare indeed. Where a richer natural vein has been vouchsafed, the translator may be more adventurous : Mr Worsley's *Iliad* contains at least one brilliant instance—Book IX., stanza 51, perhaps the finest in the whole volume—where an entire stanza has been wrought out of four lines of the original. Contraction, on the other hand, is, under ordinary circumstances, a far less evil. Homer, if Mr Arnold will not allow us to call him garrulous, abounds in details which even the most diffuse of later poets would omit : and though no one would

wish to cut him down, as Hobbes has done, to the Procrustean limits of metrical prose, or, like Pope, to remodel him on the conventional type of modern narrative, there are many lines and half-lines in him which might be sacrificed to an imperious necessity without sensibly diminishing the general effect of redundant simplicity. Lines are constantly occurring, the genuineness of which has been questioned, for one reason or another, by ancient or modern critics; a practice which an ingenious scholar may easily push to startling results, but which, used sparingly and with judgment, may sometimes afford legitimate relief to an embarrassed translator. I have myself ventured on this expedient less often than in theory I should hold myself justified in doing; probably not oftener than Mr Worsley has done. The Twenty-fourth Book is the only one which in my translation consists of fewer lines than in the original; and there, I trust, compression has been attained without the sacrifice of anything really important to the general effect. As to the third course, that which carries on the sense with little or no pause from stanza to stanza, it is obviously one to which the translator must not resort very

frequently. Spenser's successors have used it with more or less latitude; and there can be no doubt that under judicious management it is felt to be welcome from time to time even on poetical grounds. It admits of various degrees, the most extreme form of course being where stanza runs into stanza with no stop whatever. In this last form I have only ventured to use it two or three times, as I feel that the circumstances under which it is admissible are too delicate to be thoroughly appreciated except by a really accomplished master of metre.

I have already intimated that in some questions of rhythm, about which I had differed from Mr Worsley as a critic, I have now come to agree with him as a translator. I refer particularly to the practice of varying the cadence of the ordinary iambic line by the introduction of other feet. This is a point on which public taste has changed greatly since the days when Cowper apologised for such lines as

"Softly he laid his hand
On the old man's hand, and pushed him gently away."

(a passage which he was obliged to smooth a little even before publishing his first edition), and com-

plained that the same readers who held up Milton as a model of blank verse composition were the first to raise their voices against any one who wrote blank verse as Milton wrote it. I had doubted, however, whether these resolved feet (to borrow a term from classical prosody) were as pleasing in a stanza as in blank verse or the heroic couplet, and in any case whether Mr Worsley did not introduce them too frequently. Now that I have had to write stanza after stanza, I have become sensible that there are few greater drawbacks to the pleasure of either writer or reader than monotony, and have been glad to vary the cadence of my iambics by a copious infusion of trochees and anapæsts, and by occasionally making words melt into each other, as Cowper has done in the second of the two lines just quoted. It has been a particular satisfaction to me to apply this licence to a case in which Mr Worsley has scarcely used it at all, that of proper names. Where words like "Deiphobus" and "Antilochus," expanded to their full proportions, take up four out of the ten syllables allotted to a line, there is a pleasure in finding that they can be made to content themselves with three. A line like "Aphareus, Asca-

laphus, Deïpyrus tried" can be as easily read, to say the least, as "And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old." Proper names may occasionally be evaded by the use of shorter synonymes: Menelaus may become Atrides, and Idomeneus Crete's lord: but in the great majority of instances the translator has to meet and face them as he can. I may mention, by the way, with a little pardonable pride, that in the case of the greatest of this class of difficulties, the list of Nereids in the Eighteenth Book, where Lord Derby, writing in blank verse, has reduced the thirty-three ladies to less than half their number, fifteen, I have been fortunate enough to include twenty-three, or more than two-thirds, within the compass of a stanza.

Mr Worsley says, in his Preface to the former volume of this work, that his must certainly be considered as belonging to the class of literal translations. Probably he meant that he was literal where he was not compelled to be otherwise; that, *cæteris paribus*, he preferred adhering closely to Homer's words. At any rate, this is my own ideal; and it is one at which I believe future translators of Homer will do well to aim. A

rhyming translator will often have to deviate from the letter of the Greek, but let him be literal where he can. Judging from my own experience, I should say that in this particular metre it is possible to make about two-thirds of each stanza as close a reproduction of the original as any one has as yet attempted even in blank verse. This may not be enough for a reader who takes up a translation as a help to construing the Greek ; but it is enough for one whose object in reading is to hear Homer's story told more or less as Homer has told it. Of course the deviations from verbal accuracy should be assimilated as far as possible to the style of the rest of the work. This will be no very difficult matter to one who is moderately practised in turns of expression. Where Homer cannot be made to speak as he has spoken in the particular passage in question, it may be possible to make him speak as he has spoken elsewhere. Even rules like these depend for their success on the tact with which they are applied : there will be many instances where a translator will do right to disregard them, and reject a literal rendering which no mechanical considerations forbid, because his sense of the requirements of the passage tells

him that they can better be satisfied in some other way. But on the whole, I believe the course indicated above to be the true one ; and I seem to see in it possibilities which some happier artist may one day convert into certainties.

Following Mr Worsley's example, I have appended no notes to my translation. There was indeed no particular reason why I should do otherwise. I have no pretension to discuss Homeric difficulties as a commentator : my interpretations will pretty generally explain themselves, and those who do not agree with them are, I trust, not likely to pronounce them impossible.

It only remains for me to say that I value highly the privilege of having been allowed to complete Mr Worsley's version of the two great Homeric poems. That version, I believe, is likely to enjoy a wider recognition than it has yet met with ; and it will be a gratification to me to have removed the impediment which an unfinished performance must always interpose in the way of its own success. It was the publication of the first volume of his *Odyssey* which made my acquaintance with him pass into a friendship ;

and though our friendship, when formed, did not depend wholly on mere literary sympathies, I am glad that one of its results should be that of associating me with the work by which his name is most likely to be preserved in the recollection of lovers of poetry.

CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

XIII.

	PAGE
STANZAS 1-5. Zeus turns away from the battle, and Poseidon comes in his chariot through the sea to help the Achaïans. *6-14. He encourages the Aïantes and others of their leaders. *15-23. Hector leads on the Trojans, and the armies engage, with various fortunes. *24-37. Poseidon (in the form of Thoeas) talks to Idomeneus, and Idomeneus to Mériones. *38-52. Idomeneus rallies the Achaïans against the Trojans in spite of Deiphobus. *53-60. Deiphobus calls Æneas, and Idomeneus summons his comrades. *61-66. Mériones and Antilochus kill or disable several of the enemy. *67-77. Menelaus wounds Deiphobus: others of the Trojans are killed, and Paris shoots one of the Achaïans. *78-96. Hector, urged by Polydamas, comes to the rescue, rebukes Paris for his inertness, and leads on the Trojans. He and Aias defy each other.	1

XIV.

STANZAS 1-5. Nestor, hearing the uproar, goes towards the battle, and meets Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes wounded. *6-15. They converse, Agamemnon counselling flight, which Odysseus and Diomedes deprecate. *16, 17. Poseidon encourages Agamemnon and the Achaïans. *18-25. Hera, wishing to put Zeus to sleep, borrows the girdle of Aphrodite. *26-32. She entreats Sleep to help her, and he consents with some reluctance. *33-39. Zeus embraces her, and falls asleep. *40-44. Sleep takes the news to Poseidon, who leads on the Achaïans in person. *45-48. Aias disables Hector with a stone, and makes him retire. *49-53. Various warriors are killed on both sides, the Achaïans having the advantage.	35
--	----

XV.

PAGE

STANZAS 1-9. Zeus awakes, and taxes Hera with her treachery. She denies it, and is sent to fetch Apollo and Iris. *10-16. She irritates the gods against Zeus, especially Ares, who is restrained by Athene. *17-25. Zeus sends Iris to Poseidon, who first refuses to leave the field, but afterwards obeys. *26-32. Apollo is sent to Hector, and restores his strength. *33-45. Thoas rallies the Achaians, who are nevertheless dismayed by Apollo. Hector and his men cross the trench to the ships. Nestor prays to Zeus. *46, 47. Patroclus goes to Achilleus with the news. *48-77. Battle at the ships. Teucer's bow fails, and the Achaians gradually give way. *78-87. Nestor encourages them, and Aias rallies them. The latter stands on a ship and kills twelve of the assailants with his own hand. . 55

XVI.

STANZAS 1-5. Patroclus endeavours to pacify Achilleus. *6-11. Achilleus consents to send him out in his own armour, charging him to return when he has beaten off the assailants. *12-24. Aias gradually gives way, and one of the ships is fired. Patroclus and the Myrmidons arm hastily. *25-29. Achilleus prays to Zeus for their success. *30-41. The tide is turned, and many Trojan warriors slain. *42-48. Hector at last flies, pursued by Patroclus, who follows the Trojans to the city. *49-53. Sarpedon confronts him. Zeus doubts whether to rescue Sarpedon, but lets the fight go on. *54-59. Patroclus kills Sarpedon, who, as he dies, bids Glaucus defend his body. *60-65. Glaucus, on praying to Apollo, is healed of his wound. He stimulates Hector, who leads the Trojans against Patroclus. *66-79. Battle about Sarpedon's body. The Achaians capture the arms, but the body is carried off by Apollo. *80-82. Patroclus attacks the city wall, but Apollo repulses him. *83-90. Hector returns to the battle, but his charioteer is killed and stripped of his arms. *91-99. Patroclus is smitten and disarmed by Apollo, wounded by Euphorbus, and at last killed by Hector. Hector insults the dying man, who prophesies vengeance. . . . 85

XVII.

STANZAS 1-7. Euphorbus, attempting to carry off Patroclus' body, is killed by Menelaus. *7-15. Hector strips off Patroclus' armour, but is prevented by Aias from capturing the body. *16-24. Glaucus upbraids Hector, who puts on the armour he won from Patroclus, and makes another effort. Zeus prophesies his fortune. *25-36.

	PAGE
The Trojans and Achæans contend for the body, the latter having the advantage. *37-47. Æneas rallies the Trojans: the combat increases in intensity. *48-60. Zeus gives strength to the horses of Achilles, which carry Automedon, their charioteer, into the battle. He and the Aiantes make head against Hector and Æneas. *61-69. Menelaus fights bravely; but the Achæans are forced to retreat. *70-79. Aias prays to Zeus for light. Antilochus is sent with the news of Patroclus' death to Achilles. *80-85. Menelaus and Méroïones carry off the body, while the Aiantes keep back the Trojans.	119

XVIII. ✓

STANZAS 1-9. Grief of Achilles at hearing the news. Thetis comes from the sea to ask the cause. *10-17. Discourse of Thetis and Achilles. She goes to ask Hephæstus to make him fresh armour. *18-27. Hector seizes Patroclus' body. Iris comes to Achilles, who appears without his armour, and by the terror of his presence causes the body to be finally rescued. *28-36. The armies separate for the night. The Trojans hold a council: Polydamas urges retreat to the city: Hector opposes him and prevails. *37-42. Achilles weeps over Patroclus. Zeus rallies Hera on her fondness for the Achæans. *43-71. Thetis makes her request to Hephæstus, who readily grants it, and makes the armour. Description of the shield.	149
---	-----

XIX. ✓

STANZAS 1-4. Thetis brings the arms to Achilles. *5-8. Achilles publicly renounces his anger against Agamemnon. *9-16. Agamemnon excuses himself, and tenders the gifts he had offered before. *17-27. Achilles wishes to attack the Trojans at once, but is prevailed on by Odysseus to wait till the army has taken refreshment. *28-31. The gifts are presented to Achilles, and Briseis restored. *32-34. Briseis bewails Patroclus. *35-40. Achilles, refusing refreshment, is strengthened by Athene. *41-48. He arms himself and mounts his chariot. Speech of his horse Xanthus	173
---	-----

XX. ✓

STANZAS 1-8. Council of the gods. Zeus bids them help the contending parties as they choose. They descend to the field. *9-17. Æneas is urged by Apollo to challenge Achilles. Hera and Poseidon discourse thereupon. *18-28. Parley of Achilles and Æneas.	
---	--

CONTENTS.

xxvii

	PAGE
*29-40. They fight: Poseidon rescues Æneas. *41-50. Achilles attacks the Trojans, and kills among others Polydorus, Hector's brother. Hector engages him, but is withdrawn by Apollo from the combat. *51-56. Slaughter of the Trojans by Achilles.	191

XXI.

STANZAS 1-16. Achilles drives the Trojans to the river Xanthus and kills them there, among them Lycaon, son of Priam, whom he had formerly taken captive and allowed to be ransomed. *17-25. He encounters Asteropeus, chief of the Pæonians, and kills him and many of his men. *26-32. The River-god begs him to desist, and on his refusal attempts to overwhelm him. *33-38. Poseidon reassures him. The River-god calls for help from Simois. *39-46. Hephestus attacks and dries up the river. The god submits. *47-52. Ares attacks Athene: she overthrows him, and also Aphrodite, who had come to help him. *53-56. Apollo declines to fight with Poseidon. *57-61. Artemis, remonstrating with Apollo, is punished by Hera. She complains to Zeus. Hermes will not fight with Leto. *62-72. Apollo incites Agenor to encounter Achilles. Taking Agenor's form, he flies himself before Achilles, drawing him from the town, which the Trojans are thus enabled to enter. . 211

XXII.

STANZAS 1-3. Apollo discloses himself to Achilles, who is indignant. *4-11. Priam and Hecabe in vain entreat Hector to enter the town. *12-20. Hector resolves to confront Achilles, but, on his approach, flies before him, and is pursued three times round the walls of Troy. *21, 22. Zeus deliberates whether to rescue Hector, but eventually abandons him to Athene. *23-29. Athene, taking the form of Deiphobus, induces Hector to meet Achilles. *30-42. They fight, and Hector is killed. *43-47. The body is maltreated by the Achæians, and dragged by Achilles behind his chariot. *48-60. Grief of Priam, Hecabe, and Andromache. 237

XXIII.

STANZAS 1-6. After bewailing Patroclus, Achilles lets his troops refresh themselves, and takes food himself. *7-12. Patroclus appears to Achilles in sleep, and begs to be buried instantly. *13-21. The Achæians collect wood, and a funeral pile is made, on which captives and other victims are slaughtered by Achilles. *22-25. The pile not taking fire, Boreas and Zephyrus are summoned by Iris, and a

blaze is kindled, which burns all night. *28-32. In the morning the bones are collected and buried, and Achilles proposes prizes for various games. *33-39. Nestor gives Antilochus advice for the chariot-race, the first of the games. *40-45. The race described. Eumelus, who was winning, is thrown from his car by Athene. *46-50. Antilochus, pretending to drive recklessly, contrives to pass Menelaus. *51-56. Idomeneus and the lesser Aias, who are among the spectators, dispute about the result of the race. *57-60. Diomedes comes in first, Antilochus second. *61-63. Achilles gives an extra prize to Eumelus. *64-69. Menelaus disputes Antilochus' right to the prize, but is appeased by his forbearance. *70-74. Achilles gives an unclaimed prize to Nestor, who recalls the exploits of his youth. *75-79. The boxing-match, which is won by Epeius. *80-84. The wrestling-match, which is undecided between Aias and Odysseus. *85-89. The foot-race, won by Odysseus. *90-93. The single combat between Diomedes and Aias, which is stopped. *94, 95. The quoit-throwing, where Polyestes conquers. *96-99. The archery-match, between Meriones and Teucer, which is won by the former. *100, 101. The dart-throwing, where Achilles gives the first prize to Agamemnon, without allowing competition. 259

XXIV. ✓

STANZEAS 1, 2. ✓ Achilles cannot sleep for sorrow. In the morning he drags Hector thrice round Patroclus' tomb. *3-13. ✓ The gods are indignant at his conduct: at last Zeus sends for Thetis, and bids her tell him to allow the body to be ransomed. *14-20. ✓ Thetis goes to Achilles, and Iris to Priam. *21-36. In spite of Hecabe's dissuasion, Priam sets out with a herald to treat for the ransom. *37-51. Zeus sends Hermes to guide Priam, who arrives safely at Achilles' dwelling. *52-62. Priam supplicates Achilles, who relents, though he is somewhat chafed by the old man's subsequent importunity. *63-74. The body is restored. Priam sups with Achilles, and retires to rest. *75, 76. Hermes wakes Priam, and conducts him back to the city. *77-85. Lamentations for Hector, especially by Andromache, Hecabe, and Helen. *86-88. Hector's funeral. 293

BOOK XIII.

1

BUT Zeus, when Hector by the fleet he spies,
There let them toil in hard and evil case,
And, turning from the war his radiant eyes,
Swept the long fields of fiery-stallioned Thrace,
Tribes of the sword, and that mare-milking race,
Of plain life, the most sinless of mankind:
But Troyward now his radiant eyes and face
He turned no more, not dreaming in his mind
Aught could of help to either be from gods designed.

2

Nor the strong Shaker of the Earth meanwhile
Watched without eyes. He, sitting on the crest
That from high Samothracia, woodland isle,
Soared loftiest up, reviewed in sore unrest
The battle. From that watchtower in the west
All Ida could be seen, fair Troy discerned,
The camp too, and the barks. With pitying breast,
There sitting, he beheld the Achaians turned
In grim rout, and with fury against Zeus he burned.

3

Quick from the rugged mount he sprang with might,
Devouring with long stride the spacious air :
Tall mountains and wild woods, from height to height,
Rocked to the immortal feet that hurrying bare
Poseidon in his wrath. Thrice strode he there,
And in the fourth stride came to where his seat
Shines golden in the depth, eternal, fair :
Then yoked the steeds, gold mane and brazen feet,
And wrapt himself with gold, in panoply complete.

4

Then the fair-twisted lash, itself of gold,
He seized, and on the chariot with a leap
Sprang : the light wheels along the sea-plain rolled.
From cave and lair the creatures of the deep
Flocked to sport round him, and the crystal heap
Of waters in mild joy disparting knew
Their lord ; and, as the fleet pair onward sweep,
The brazen axle was not touched with dew.
Thus to Achaia's fleet the ethereal horses flew.

5

Midway from Tenedos, athwart the main
To rugged Imbros, a broad cave below
Lies secret in the gulf : his horses twain
There great Poseidon from his car let go,
Stayed them at rest, and did before them throw
Ambrosial provender whereon to feed,
And gyves of gold about their feet bestow,
Not to be slipt or sundered, their lord's need
Thus to await ; then parted for the camp with speed.

6

Like storm or fire the Trojans, rolled in one,
With shouts and noise and a dire tramp of feet
Came hurrying behind Hector, Priam's son,
To trap the Achaian chieftains in the fleet,
And slay them. Rising from his watery seat,
Like Calchas in his mien, with voice as clear,
Came up the Earth-shaker, and did first entreat
Two, quick of heart: "O brave Aiantes, hear:
Yours only is the field, if ye will fight, not fear.

7

"Though Troy's assault our barriers hath o'erleapt,
I fear not their devouring hands elsewhere:
All by the main host can at bay be kept.
But for this road I mightily tremble, where
Mad, like to fire, raves Hector, who doth swear
That strong Zeus fathered him. Would now some god
Inspire you to be firm and rally and dare,
Hector would feel ere long the avenging rod,
Ay, though the Sire himself prepared the path he trod."

8

He, ending, with his wand smote both, and filled
Their hearts with strong wrath, and their limbs made light,
Hand, arm, and foot, as in his power he willed.
Then like a towering falcon, swift in flight,
That darts from a sheer point of perilous height
To seize a bird that cowers along the plain,
So passing swept the Earth-shaker from their sight.
Oileus' son first knew him of the twain,
Fleet Aias, and thus cheered his friend in eager strain:

9

"Aias, awake : some habitant of heaven,
Like Calchas in his mien, deriding fear,
Bids thee and me fight on : this warning given
Came never from the mouth of mortal seer.
From greave to sole, by feet and footmarks clear,
I knew him (the true gods are lightly known)
Even as he passed. I yearn to find new cheer
In battle, far more valiant am I grown,
And in my limbs I feel a buoyance not my own."

10

And Telamonian Aias answering cried :
"So my heart dances, and my fingers play
Round the grim spear, nor will my feet be tied
From rushing to the battle. I burn to slay,
Alone, fierce Hector, or be slain." So they,
Rejoicing ; for the god inspired their heart.
He through the rear meanwhile pursued his way,
Where men paused breathing by the ships apart,
Loosed in their knees with toil, and pierced with inward smart.

11

For bitter was the grief when they beheld
The Trojans scale their wall : discerning these
They groaned, and salt tears from their eyelids welled,
And hope fled. But the ruler of the seas
Came in the midst, and roused their ranks with ease.
First Teucer he set on, then Leïtus,
Thoas, Deïpyrus, and Mériones,
Brave Peneleus, and swift Antilochus,
All heroes ; and aloud in wingèd words cried thus :

12

"Fie, youths of Argos: 'twere your task, your joy
To save us: if you fail, our doom is near:
Flinch, and to-day we bend our necks to Troy.
O earth, O heaven, to view the Trojans here!
Who seemed but now poor feeble frightened deer,
That wander in the forest, driven and rent
By wolf, pard, jackal, and know nought but fear;
So they, when late we gave our thunders vent,
Dared not a moment stand, but flying headlong went.

13

"Now, from their city far, they threat the fleet.
Ay, craven is our chief, his people tame;
At feud with him, the foe they will not beat
Off from their ships, but die like hunted game.
What matter e'en though his be all the blame,
Lord Agamemnon, prince of wide control,
For that on Peleus' son he laid foul shame?
Not therefore should we skulk with coward soul,
But haste to heal the breach: brave hearts are soon made whole.

14

"Nay, 'tis not seemly that ye thus hang back,
Flowers of the host each one. A meaner wight
I would not chide, though he in war were slack:
But you—ye move my very heart with spite.
Ah friends! full soon worse evil yet may light
For this day's sloth:—but in your breasts awake
Remorse and shame: for 'tis a dreadful fight.
See Hector at the ships! behold him make
Fierce onset, and the gates and massy fastenings break!"

15

So the god stirred the Achaians into flame ;
Around the Aiantes stood their close array,
Such as not Ares, were he there, would blame,
Nor marshaller Pallas : for their best were they
That for the onset of Troy's host did stay,
Spear upon spear, targe upon targe firm pressed :
Shield jostled shield, helm helm, man man, that day :
On the bright helmet-cone each waving crest
Its fellow touched : so closely side by side they dressed.

16

Quivered the javelins in their stalwart hands :
Straight on they looked, and yearned for the death-lock.
On plunged the Trojans : Hector led their bands
Right forward ; as a boulder from a rock,
Which wintry torrent down the steep doth knock,
Loosening the stiff rock-joints with infinite rain ;
High bounding it flies onward ; with the shock
The wood rings ; still it travels, till the plain
Receives it ; then no more it plunges, although fain.

17

So Hector : whiles he vaunted he would reach
The Achaian camp and navy without let,
Slaying and harrying e'en to the sea-beach ;
But when at last their serried ranks he met,
Steadfast he stood, with foot 'gainst foot firm set :
They with sharp swords and javelins doubly steeled
Still thrusting, pricking, off the assailant beat,
Achaia's sons : he, staggering backward, reeled,
While in his followers' ears his voice like trumpet pealed :

18

"Troy, Lycia, Dardany, close-fighters stout !
Stand firm : not long shall these Achaians bide,
Though like a four-squared tower they mass their rout :
This lance shall make them yield, if he, whose bride
Is royal Hera, be indeed my guide."
So saying, the spirit in each breast he swayed.
'Mong them Deïphobus moved in martial pride,
His shield's broad disk before him full displayed,
Advancing with light step, footing it 'neath its shade.

19

At him brave Mériones directs his spear ;
It struck the rounded bull-hide shield, nor failed,
Yet pierced it not, but in the shaft broke sheer :
Holding his shield aloof, Deïphobus quailed ;
Nought could he else, by that strong arm assailed :
But the chief joined his fellows, wroth in mind
At victory lost and lance that nought availed,
Then turned him to the ships, and went to find
A spear of goodly length, left in his hut behind.

20

But the rest fought, and deafening was the blare.
Teucer the first laid low with deadly aim
Imbrius spear-famed, horse-breeding Mentor's heir :
His home Pedæus, ere the Achaians came,
King Priam's bastard child his wedded dame :
But when the Achaian ships brought peril near,
He dwelt in Troy by Priam, graced the same
As he had been his son : whom 'neath the ear
The son of Telamon wounded, and drew back his spear.

21

He fell, as falls a tender-foliaged ash,
Hewn on a tall hill-top in open view :
So fell he : his bright arms about him crash.
Eager to strip his harness, Teucer flew,
But, as he sprang, Hector a javelin threw.
Teucer, perceiving, shunned the coming wound :
Actorion's son, Amphimachus, it slew,
Marching to war : his breast the javelin found ;
Heavily fell he, and his arms gave dreadful sound.

22

Then forth sprang Hector, fain in his bold heart
To pluck the helm that the dead brow concealed :
At him, so springing, Aias cast his dart,
Which reached not to the flesh, such metal steeled
The chief's whole frame : yet smote it the bossed shield
With terrible impact : he from both the slain
Fell backward : them the Achaians dragged from field :
Amphimachus the Athenian captains twain,
Stichius and great Menestheus, drew to their own train.

23

Imbrius the while the two Aiantes draw ;
E'en as two lions, through the briary brake,
A goat, late snatched from dogs' sharp-dented jaw,
High o'er the ground, held by their grinders, take ;
So of his arms these twain did plunder make,
Holding him high : Oileus' son withal
The head smote off, wroth for Amphimachus' sake,
Then whirled it 'mid the armies like a ball,
And at the feet of Hector it in dust did fall.

24

Then glowed Poseidon's heart with wrathful heat
For his dear grandson slaughtered by the foe :
Campward he turned him, hastening to the fleet,
Argos to rouse, and work the Trojans woe.
And now Idomeneus confronts him, lo,
Leaving his comrade from the fight returned,
In his knee's hollow galled by a shrewd blow ;
Whom to the leeches' charge he gave, and turned
To his hut-door ; for still in war he yearned.

25

Him then the great Earth-shaking king bespoke,
In voice to Thoas like, Andræmon's son :—
The same was ruler of the Ætolian folk,
Lord of all Pleuron and steep Calydon,
And, like a god, from all men honour won :—
“ Idomeneus, Crete's lord, in council high,
Where be those taunts, those words of menace gone,
Wherein the Achæians trusted to defy
Their foes ? ” and to his speech the Cretan made reply :

26

“ O Thoas, none has earned him blame to-day,
If right I judge : for all in war are skilled :
None from the harness draws his neck away,
Nor shuns the fight, by soulless panic chilled :
But thus, I ween, Kronion's power hath willed
That far from Argos we should fade and die.
But, Thoas—for thou erst thy part hast filled,
And urgest on whom lagging thou mayst spy—
So cease not now, but each with apt monition ply.”

27

Then did divine Poseidon speech employ :
“ Friend, may that man never again come back
From Ilion, but lie there, the wild dog’s toy,
Who wills to-day in combat to be slack.
But arm thee and come hither ; we must track
This way together, if help be in us twain :
Weaklings from union gain the strength they lack :
But we might counter heroes, not in vain.”
So spake the god, and parted ’mid the fight again.

28

But when the Cretan reached his hut well-planned,
Seizing two spears, himself in arms he dight,
Then took his way like lightning, which in hand
Kronion flashes from Olympus’ height,
A sign to mortals ; for its rays are bright ;
So radiant shone the brass his breast around.
On him the good squire Mériōnes did light,
Close by the hut ; for thither was he bound,
To fetch a spear : then spake the Cretan king renowned :

29

“ Mériōnes, Molus’ son, friend of my heart,
Why com’st thou now, leaving the battle-plain ?
Say, art thou wounded, rankling from some dart,
Or tidings dost thou bring ? I am not fain
To sit in the hut, but combat to darrain.”
And prudent Mériōnes in answer spoke :
“ Good lord, if spear yet in thy hut remain,
I come to seek it ; for my own is broke,
Dealing Deïphobus’ shield an unavailing stroke.”

30

To whom Idomeneus did answer make :
"Spears thou wilt find e'en to thy heart's content,
Or one or twenty, wouldst thou many take,
Against the shining walls securely leant,
Spoils of the Trojans, which myself have rent
From their dead grasp in battle: for I ween
To fight with foes from far I ne'er was bent.
Hence in my store are spears and bucklers seen,
Helmets and breastplates eke, right dazzling in their sheen."

31

And prudent Mériones thus made reply :
"In my hut, too, and in my black ship's hold,
Much Trojan spoil is treasured: but not nigh
Lies it, that I should take it. From of old,
I swear it, ne'er forgat I to be bold,
But in the van of battle hand to hand
I place me, when the war is heavenward rolled.
Perchance some other of the Achaian band
Knows not my deeds, but thou, methinks, dost understand."

32

And him Idomeneus answered, lord of Crete :
"I know thy worth: why this complaining tone?
For were our best now chosen at the fleet
For ambush, where men's valour best is shown—
(For there the brave man from the coward is known ;
The coward turns red and pale ; he may not rest ;
Crouching he squats, nor feels his knees his own ;
A-chattering fall his teeth : against his breast
Knocks loudly his faint heart, by the death-fear oppressed :

33

"But the brave man no change of hue doth know ;
Nor quailleth he, once set in ambuscade,
But yearns each moment to assail the foe)—
So wert thou chosen, I ween, would none upbraid
Thy strength of arm, nor deem thy heart afraid :
For shouldst thou feel dart sting or falchion bite,
Not back or shoulder would receive the blade,
But on the belly or the breast 'twould light,
Meeting thee front to front, on rushing to the fight.

34

"But haste thee, lest some friend be roused to ire
To see us twain, like children, prating here :
Take from my hut a spear at thy desire."
He said, and Mériones, swift Ares' peer,
Took quickly from the hut a brazen spear,
And went after his chief with rapid stride.
Look how grim Ares, whom we mortals fear,
Marches to war, his darling at his side,
Strong Terror, at whose touch e'en stoutest hearts have died:

35

They twain rise up from Thrace, and harness don,
Hearing the Ephyri or Phlegyæ pray :
Yet aid they not both armies, but to one
Or other, as they will, award the day :
So the two warriors moved in steel array,
And Mériones did first his chief accost :
"Where wouldst thou, my good lord, we join the fray ?
Or at the right or centre of the host,
Or at the left ? for there, meseems, the need is most."

36

To whom Crete's lord Idomeneus began :
"To guard the centre lacks not many a wight,
The Aiantes twain, and Teucer, our best man
To shoot, and good alike in standing fight ;
These, well I ween, of war will satiate quite
Hector Priamides, though stout his frame :
Hard shall it be for him, with all his might,
To wrap our vessels in devouring flame,
Since their unconquered hands it hoves him first to tame,

37

"Save great Kronion's self the battle wield,
And launch the blazing firebrand on our fleet :
But ne'er would Telamonian Aias yield
To mortal man, whose food is grinded wheat,
Pervious to wound of stone or iron sleet :
Not to Achilleus would he yield, I trow,
In standing battle, though less swift his feet.
So fare we to the left, that we may know
If glory we shall win, or give it to some foe."

38

He spoke ; and Méridones, swift Ares' peer,
Sped till they reached the post where aid was due.
But when the foe beheld Crete's lord draw near,
Him and his squire, in armour bright to view,
Cheering their mates, on him at once they flew,
And at the ships fresh battle 'gan to blaze :
E'en as when whirlwinds from shrill gales ensue
In summer time, when dustiest are the ways,
And, clashing all together, clouds of dust they raise,

39

So joined the fight, each in his heart of hearts
On slaying of the other fiercely bent.
The man-destroying fray bristled with darts
Brandished in warlike hands: the eyes were shent
By the dire brazen glare from harness sent,
Helms all ablaze, and bucklers dazzling bright,
And new-scoured hauberks, in collision blent:
Good sooth, he were an iron-hearted wight
Who should look on with joy, nor sorrow at the sight.

40

Two sons of Kronos with diverse intent
To mortal chiefs were causing many a fall:
Zeus to Troy's folk and Hector victory meant,
Gracing Achilleus, swift of foot, nor all
Wished he to slay the Achaians at Troy wall,
But grace to Thetis and her son would show:
While on the Argives did Poseidon call,
Stolen from the hoar deep: for their rout was woe
To see, and wrath he bore to Zeus as to a foe.

41

Sprung from one race, one father, were they two,
But Zeus in birth was elder, and more wise:
Therefore the younger dared not in plain view
Bring succour, but, unmarked of prying eyes,
Went stirring up the ranks, a man in guise.
So they now tightened, now relaxed, the chain
Of war, that makes the combat fall and rise,
Invincible, indissoluble, whose strain
Loosens the knees of many on the dusty plain.

42

Then, with his grey-strewn locks, the veteran wight
Idomeneus gave heart to his own crew,
While in the breasts of Troy he stirred up fright.
Othryoneus of Cabetes town he slew,
Who, to win fame, had come to battle new,
And Priam's loveliest daughter sought to wive,
Cassandra ; nor for dower deigned he to sue,
But swore a mighty work he would contrive,
E'en from the land perforce Achaia's host to drive.

43

Wherefore old Priam promised with an oath
To give her to his suit : he, for his part,
Fought boldly, trusting in that plighted troth.
At him Idomeneus directs his dart,
And smites him as he strides, with nicest art.
Nor did his brazen hauberk aught bestead :
Full in his belly was infix'd the smart :
With a dire clang of armour he fell dead,
And o'er his corpse the chief made vaunting speech, and said :

44

"Othryoneus, thou of all men art most rare,
Wilt thou perform the word that thou didst plight
To Dardan Priam for his daughter fair.
Lo, proffers of like worth thy choice invite :
Atrides' daughter, loveliest and most bright,
Fetched from her Argive home, thy spouse shall be,
Wouldst thou with us in Ilion's sack unite.
But follow, and let us at the ships agree
On terms of dower ; for ours are liberal hands and free."

45

Then by the feet he from the combat dire
Dragged him ; but Asius drew with vengeance nigh
Before his steeds, which, snorting loud, his squire
Held at his back : a lance he aimed, to fly
At Crete's brave monarch, who with wary eye
First pierced his throat, and drave the weapon through :
He fell, as falls an oak, or poplar high,
Or leafy pine, which men in the mountains hew
With axe of keenest edge, a mast for some ship's crew.

46

So there, the horses and the car before
Lying, the bloody dust he clutched and bit :
While the lorn charioteer was wildered sore,
Nor durst he for his life, so scared his wit,
Turn back the horses : him Antilochus hit
Full with his spear ; nor could the hauberk stay
The forceful point, but in the belly it lit :
Gasping he fell : the steeds, the conqueror's prey,
Antilochus from Troy drove to the camp away.

47

Then, for lost Asius sorrowing sore at heart,
Nigh to Idomeneus Deiphobus drew,
And, levelling, hurled at him a shining dart ;
But the sage chief foresaw and did eschew
The coming of the spear, and o'er him threw
The brazen buckler which in hand he bore,
Rounded with hide, and fit with arm-stays two ;
Sheltered 'neath which he cowered : the dart flew o'er
Just grazing the brass rim, not doomed to shed his gore.

48

Harsh the brass sounded, by the blow jarred thus :
Yet from that hand the spear not vainly fled,
But pierced Hypsenor, son of Hippasus,
Beneath the heart, and soon his vigour sped :
And vaunting with loud shout Deiphobus said :
“ Not unavenged lies Asius ; but with pride
He to the grisly portals of the dead
Will travel down, thus fitted with a guide.”
Grief on the Argives fell, as boastfully he cried.

49

But most of all Antilochus' heart was stung ;
Yet not, though sore confounded, he declined
From his friend's rescue, but around him flung
His buckler : and the corpse two comrades joined,
Makisteus and Alastor, with one mind,
Heavily groaning, to the ships conveyed :
Yet ceased not Crete's brave lord ; for still he pined
Either to cast some Trojan in night's shade,
Or crash to earth himself, warding the hostile raid.

50

There stood Alcathous, Æsyetes' son,
By ties of marriage to Anchises near,
Whose eldest child, Hippodame, he won
(Father and mother held that maiden dear
In her young girlhood ; for she owned no peer
In beauty or choice works or counsels wise ;
So Troy's best hero took her for his fere) :
Him then Poseidon made the Cretan's prize,
Fettering his goodly limbs and dazzling his bright eyes.

51

Thus he, of foresight and of flight bereaved,
Like to a column or high-foliaged oak
Motionless standing, in his breast received
The Cretan spear, which through his hauberk broke.
Harshly the cleft brass sounded with the stroke :
Down came he thundering, in his heart the spear ;
The panting breast with palpitation shook
The javelin, till it stayed its dread career ;
And thus Idomeneus spoke in vaunting accents clear :

52

“ Deïphobus, seems it just that we have spilt
Three lives for one, for all thy boasting free ?
Come, and thyself confront me, if thou wilt,
And learn how truly child of Zeus I be :
For Zeus erewhile was sire of Minos : he
Had for his son Deucalion, without stain :
Deucalion, blameless chief, gave birth to me,
Lord of wide Crete ; who now have crossed the main
To bring to thee, thy sire, and other Trojans bane.”

53

He said : Deïphobus inly held debate
Should he some other Trojan call to share
The peril, or alone confront his fate.
So as he turned his swift mind everywhere,
Best seemed it to Æneas to repair :
Him found he placed in rear of all the rest,
For ever to king Priam wrath he bare,
Who graced him not, though counted with the best :
Whom, standing at his side, he in winged words addressed :

54

"Æneas, Trojan chieftain, need is sore
To help thy kin, if kinship be not vain :
Come, succour we Alcathous, who of yore
Reared thee, an infant, with a kinsman's pain :
Him now spear-famed Idomeneus hath slain."
He said : Æneas' heart within was stung :
To seek Crete's lord he marched, for battle fain.
Yet quailed Idomeneus not, like weakling young,
But stood, as in lone place the mountain slopes among

55

A forest boar stands waiting for the attack,
Soon by keen dogs and hunters to be galled,
Whetting his teeth and bristling his arched back,
While his fierce eyes shine bright and fiery-balled,
So stood spear-famed Idomeneus unappalled,
While came Æneas on with rapid stride :
Antilochus and Mériones he called,
Aphareus, Ascalaphus, Deïpyrus tried,
And, quickening their slack steps, with wingèd accents cried :

56

"Haste to my rescue, friends ! for sore I dread
Swift-foot Æneas, who comes bearing down ;
Strong is he in the war to strike men dead,
And youth is with him, which is valour's crown.
Were we both young, thus minded, large renown
Should he bear off or I." He spoke : they all
Came near, with serried shields, for battle bouné.
Likewise Æneas on his mates did call,
Deïphobus and Paris and Agenor tall.

57

These with him led the Trojans : but behind
Followed the host, as sheep to the water-side
Follow a ram, which glads the shepherd's mind.
E'en thus Æneas' heart beat high with pride,
To see the people follow him as their guide.
They round Alcathous' body closely pressed,
And hand to hand their long spear-handles plied ;
Terribly clanged the metal round each breast,
As each assailing each his levelled lance addressed.

58

But above all two sought each other's blood,
Æneas and Idomeneus spear-renowned :
First hurled Æneas ; but the foe eschewed
The coming lance ; it passed without a wound,
And quiveringly took lodgment in the ground,
Having fled forth from that strong hand in vain.
The Cretan spear CEnomaus' belly found,
His hauberk cleft, and driving on amain
Sucked up his entrails : prone he fell, and clutched the plain.

59

Forth from the dead his lance the Cretan drew,
But of the arms that clad him ne'er a one
Could he strip off : so thick the javelins flew.
No longer supple were his limbs to run,
To seek his own lance, or another's shun ;
So standing he beat off the day of woe,
But swiftly now his feet no longer won
Their way from war : at whom, retiring slow,
Deiphobus, ever wroth, his shining lance let go.

60

Again he missed him : but the javelin struck
Mighty Ascalaphus, the war-god's own
Beloved son : sent with full force it stuck
In the shoulder : he, clutching the ground, fell prone.
Nor to fierce Ares yet the fate was known
Of his own son, in raging combat quelled :
But on Olympus, by bright clouds o'ershone,
He sat, by mandate of the Sire compelled,
Where bide the other gods, from battle-field withheld.

61

Now round the body of Ascalaphus dead
Rage the two bands, in combat close and near ;
Deiphobus plucked the helm from the fallen head ;
But instant Mériones, swift Ares' peer,
Sprang forth, and in his arm infixed a spear :
Dropped from the hand, the casque a tinkling made :
And Mériones again, withouten fear,
Sprang like a vulture forth, retrieved the blade,
And backward to his friends retreated, nor delayed.

62

But him, the wounded, his own brother dear,
Polites, his two hands about him spread,
Brought where the war more faintly strikes the ear,
To his fleet steeds, which there held distant stead,
With charioteer and chariot furnished,
Behind the fight : they to the city win
Their way with him, deep groaning as half dead,
While the blood trickles from the new-rent skin :
But still the rest fought on, and deafening was the din.

63

At Aphareus, spear in hand, Æneas sprung,
And on his throat impressed a wound malign :
His head drooped sideways : round him, falling, clung
Buckler and helm, and death bedimmed his eyne.
Forth rushed Antilochus, and with quick design
Smote Thoön on the back, and ripped the vein
That from the neck runs straight adown the spine :
All this he ripped : *he* grovelling on the plain
Fell, stretching to his comrades his two hands for pain.

64

Forth sprang Antilochus and his harness reft,
Sharp looking round : the Trojans with massed power
Kept striking his broad buckler right and left ;
Yet might not their keen steel his flesh devour,
For great Poseidon in that javelin-shower
Still guarded Nestor's son : who yet their band
Shunned not, but turned him to the deadly stour :
Nor paused his spear, but quivered in his hand,
While ever fatal aim or furious charge he planned.

65

But Adamas, Asius' son, his fell intent
Well noted, as from side to side he peered :
So, charging hand to hand, he 'gainst him bent
His sharp-edged weapon, and the buckler speared :
But lord Poseidon of the sea-grained beard,
Grudging the conquest, snapped his lance in twain :
And half hung dangling, like a truncheon seared,
In the broad shield, half lay upon the plain :
While he, eschewing fate, drew to his friends again.

66

But Meriones, pursuing, with sharp steel
Transfix'd his groin, where cruellest the wrong
That from the war-god's hurt sad mortals feel ;
There lodged it : he fell writhing, panting strong
About it, as an ox, with many a thong
Fastened, that shepherds down the hill-side hale :
So panted he awhile, but not for long :
For Méridones the lance of deadly bale
Plucked from the wound, and darkness his dim eyes did veil.

67

Then Helenus smote with his broad sword amain
Deïpyrus' crown, and crushed his helm outright :
It dropped to earth : and of the Achaian train
One seized it, rolled among the trampling fight ;
But on the wearer's eyes fell deathful night.
Great grief the heart of Atreus' son did wring,
Brave Menelaus : burning with despite,
He hurled his threats at Helenus, hero king,
With brandished spear : that other drew his good bow-string.

68

So there these twain, one with his levelled lance,
One with drawn bow, each on the other bore :
The Trojan shot ; but the keen shaft did glance
From the smooth hauberk, and shed out no gore.
As from a winnowing-fan on some great floor
Vetches leap forth, or beans of darker hue,
By strength of winnowing and the wind's shrill blower,
So from brave Menelaus' hauberk true,
Off glancing, far apart the bitter arrow flew.

69

But valiant Menelaus with sure aim
The hand transfixed that held the bow's tough wood :
Straight through the hand the brass-tipped javelin came,
Lodged in the bow, and there as rooted stood :
He, parting to his comrades, death eschewed,
With hand loose hung, the javelin in the wound :
Which forth Agenor plucked, and stanch'd the blood,
And the maimed hand with softest wool-swathe bound,
The sling, which his good squire bore for the chief renowned.

70

Then full on Atreus' son Peisander bore ;
For his ill fate him to death's threshold drew,
Brave Spartan, by thy hand to shed his gore.
So when at closer distance stood the two,
Atrides missed, and wide his javelin flew ;
While Menelaus' shield Peisander raught
With his good spear, but failed to drive it through :
For the shield stopped it, and the spear, so caught,
Broke off: yet he rejoiced, hoping the prize he sought.

71

His silver-studded sword the Spartan waved,
While the proud foe drew forth an axe that shone
With brass, its haft of olive smoothly graved :
Then the axe smote the helmet's crested cone ;
The sword came crashing on the frontal bone
Just o'er the nose : the eyes from out the head
Dropped at his feet, and in the dust lay strown :
Writhing he fell : Atrides fixed his tread
On the broad breast, and stripped the arms, and vaunting said:

72

“Thus shall ye leave our Danaan ships at last,
Proud Trojan folk, insatiate of war’s cheer!
Enough ye wrought of rapine in the past,
Base hounds, in wronging me: nor did ye fear
The wrath of friendship’s god, who thunders clear,
Zeus, who your steep town shall in ashes lay.
Ye, boonly welcomed by my consort dear,
Her and her wealth bore wantonly away;
Now would ye burn our ships, and their defenders slay.

73

“Yet cease from war ye shall, though now so keen.
Zeus sire, they call thee men and gods among
Wisest: but this is of thy hand, I ween:
Such favour show’st thou to these men of wrong,
Who drink unsated draughts of battle strong.
Good sooth, of all things mortals have their fill,
Of sleep, and seemly dance, and warbled song,
Whereon man’s heart would liefer feast at will
Than thus on war: but Troy of war is greedy still.”

74

Then to his mates the arms, defiled with gore,
He gave, himself resuming war’s employ;
When down on him Harpalion fiercely bore,
Who with his sire Pylæmenes to Troy
Came, but returned not to his home of joy.
He with his spear Atrides’ shield essayed,
But struck not home, to work him worse annoy;
Back to his friends he passed, of fate afraid,
Sharp peering, lest with steel any his flesh invade.

75

But Mériones him dealt a bow-shot wound
On the right buttock : near the bone it tare,
Grazing the bladder's side : he to the ground
In his friends' arms sank, and lay worm-like there
Extended : out the black blood ran : with care
His Paphlagonian mates their prince consign
To the swift chariot, and to Troia bear :
'Mid them his father followed, with wet eyne ;
But for his slaughtered child was none to pay the fine.

76

That slaughter angered Paris to the core,
For the dead man Harpalion was his guest
At home, with many Paphlagonians more ;
So to the string an arrow he addressed,
And sent it forth on a revengeful quest :
Hard by a prophet's son, Euchenor, stood,
Approved in valour and of wealth possessed :
At Corinth was his home : he knew his blood
Should fall at Troy, but crossed nathless the ocean flood.

77

For oft-times Polyidus, that old seer
His sire, had told him, he must deathward go,
Or at his home, by malady severe,
Or at the ships by Trojans be laid low :
Wherefore he chose to shun the double woe
Of that sore sickness and the Achaians' blame ;
Beneath the jaw and ear he felt the blow ;
His soul fled forth, and darkness o'er him came.
So fighting on they went, as 'twere devouring flame.

78

Yet had not Hector, Zeus' own darling, heard,
That on the left side Argos brazen-mailed
Had all but won ; such strength Poseidon stirred
In them, and eke with his own arm availed :
He stood, where gate and wall he first assailed
Bursting the Danaan ranks : there on the coast
Protesilas' and Aias' ships uphaled
Stood, and the wall was lowest, where the host,
Warriors and warrior steeds, in battle rage the most.

79

Boeotians there, and Ions loosely clad,
Locrians, and Phthians, and Epeians fell
From the ships stayed him : but no strength they had
From their own ranks his onset to repel.
Foremost the Athenians met the battle's swell,
Their chief Menestheus, Peteos' valiant seed ;
And Pheidas, Stichius, Bias fought as well :
But Meges, son of Phyleus, good at need,
With Dracius and Amphion did the Epeians lead.

80

Medon and tried Podarkes, these array
The Phthian host : Oïleus' offspring base
Was Medon, Aias' brother ; but away
In Phylacè he dwelt, to shun disgrace
For a slain kinsman of his stepdame's race,
Queen Eriopis : but Podarkes tried
Did to Phylacides Iphiclus trace
His birth : so o'er the Phthians these preside,
And battle for the ships at the Boeotians' side.

81

But Oilean Aias swerved not still
From Telamonian Aias' side a hair :
But as two dark-faced oxen with one will
Straining together through the fallow fare,
Dragging behind them the firm-fastened share :
Round the horns' root the sweat breaks out like rain :
While only the smooth yoke divides the pair,
As to its end they furrow the long plain :
Shoulder to shoulder, thus those two their post maintain.

82

But on the elder Aias many and brave
Waited his friends, and bore for him his shield,
Whene'er his weary limbs relief did crave :
Yet followed not the Locrians to the field
The younger, for their bosoms were not steeled
For standing fight : no spears had they to throw,
Or helms to wear, or bucklers broad to wield :
But with their woollen sling and sounding bow
They marched, and laid with these embattled Trojans low.

83

So those before, in arms of dazzling sheen,
Waged with Troy's host and Hector furious fight,
While these behind them slung and shot unseen :
Nor did the Trojans now of war's delight
Bethink them : for the arrows quelled them quite.
Then from the vessels and the huts dismayed
Back had the Trojans fled in woful plight
To windy Ilion ; but Polydamas staid
Came up, and words like these to valiant Hector said :

84

"Hector, thou wilt not send thy wit to school :
Because in works of battle to excel
Heaven gives thee, thou must needs in council rule :
Yet all at once thou mayst not compass well :
For Heaven hath given to one war's labour fell ;
One dancing, one may song and music boast ;
But in another's breast Zeus bids to dwell
A fruitful wit, which profits a great host,
And cities saves ; but he that hath it feels it most.

85

"Yet what I meetest deem I still will say.
War's flames engird thee like a fiery zone :
The wall once passed, our men, though valiant they,
Or stand apart, or mid the vessels strown
Feebly resist, by numbers half o'erthrown.
Go now, and call our bravest here to meet ;
Then counsel we, and each man's mind be known,
Or should we fall upon the well-benched fleet,
If Zeus may conquest grant, or hence unscathed retreat.

86

"Argos, I fear, will pay us soon again
Her yestern debt : one greedy of the fight
Bides at the ships, nor will he long refrain."
He said : the word was good in Hector's sight,
Who from his chariot leaped in armour dight,
And him in wingèd words addressed straightway :
"Bide thou, and with thee keep each bravest wight :
I will go thither and confront the fray,
And hither swift return, there having said my say."

87

He ceased, and like a mountain clad with snow
Rushed forth, and raising his shrill voice on high
Through ranks of Trojans and allies did go.
They to the son of Panthous hurriedly
Betook them all, hearing great Hector's cry :
While he from point to point impetuous ran,
Deiphobus and Hélenus' valiancy,
And Adamas, and Asius, each brave man,
Seeking if he might find, along the battle's van.

88

Not all unharmed he found them, nor unshent :
Some at the ships had breathed their souls away,
By force of Argive steel to Hades sent,
While some, more happy, in the rampart lay,
Sick of their wounds. Soon passing through the fray
On the left hand he found, the host among,
Bright Paris, spouse of fair-haired Helena,
Heartening his friends and bidding them be strong ;
And at his side he stood, and chode with words of wrong :

89

" Beautiful, evil Paris, woman's slave,
Where is Deiphobus and Hélenus seer,
And Asius eke, and Adamas the brave ?
And where Othryoneus ? Now has perished sheer
High Ilium : now thy hour of doom is near."
And godlike Alexander thus begun :
" Hector, thou blam'st me who of blame am clear :
Say, if thou wilt, some other day I shun
The war ; for no mere craven is thy mother's son.

90

"Since thou didst stir the fight, we, standing here,
Strive on: but dead are they thou dost demand:
Only Deïphobus and Hélenus seer
Are gone, by long spears wounded in the hand:
But Kronos' son their slaughter did withstand.
Now lead, and we will follow in thy train
Where'er thou wilt, I and my martial band,
Not lacking valour, so but strength remain:
But past his strength may none do battle, although fain."

91

Speaking, he soothed his brother's wrathful mood:
So went they where the war-surge fiercest rolled,
Where Kebriones, Orthæus, Phalkas stood
In martial station by Polydamas bold,
With Polyphetes of immortal mould,
And Palmys, and Ascanius, mighty name,
And Morys, offspring of Hippotion old,
Who yestermorn from rich Ascania came
To take their turn: and now Zeus roused their warlike flame.

92

The march of these was like the swift descent
Of a great storm, which downward to earth's floor
Sweeps, driven by Zeus' thunder, and is blent
With ocean 'mid immeasurable uproar,
And many billows, swoln and foaming hoar,
Born of the resonant sea, with frowning crest,
Gather in ranks, these after, those before:
So, those before, these after, richly dressed
In brass, the host of Troy upon their leaders pressed.

93

Hector, grim Ares' peer, was at their head,
Offspring of Priam : he in front displayed
His rounded shield, with bull-hides thickly spread,
And plates of brass its surface overlaid.
On his broad brows his shining helmet swayed :
And, footing it beneath his shield, he tried
Rank after rank, could they be disarrayed :
But their stout bosoms nought were terrified :
And Aias to the fight dared him with mighty stride :

94

"Come on, good friend! why make this threatening show?
Not all untrained are our Achaian powers :
No ; but 'twas Zeus' ill scourge that brought us low.
Fain wouldst thou sack our fleet ; but hands are ours
Stalwart as thine : far sooner thine own towers
Shall fall, though mighty, to our flames a prey.
Nay, on thyself e'en now the moment lowers
When, flying, to the immortals thou shalt pray
For steeds as falcons swift, to bear thee safe away."

95

Thus as he spoke, aloft on his right side
An eagle soared : loud shout the Argive train,
Cheered by the sign : and Hector brave replied :
"Man-mountain, loose-tongued Aias, whence this strain ?
Would that as surely I might live and reign
Son of eternal Zeus, and Hera call
My natural mother, and those honours gain
Which to Athene and Apollo fall,
As now this day brings woe to Argives all, all, all.

96

“ With them thou too shalt perish, wilt thou wait
My javelin, which shall rend thy dainty frame,
And Trojan dogs and vultures thou shalt sate
With thy bloat carcass, now by death made tame.”
He spoke, and led them on : with loud acclaim
Shouting they followed : shouted too their rear :
Likewise the Argives shouted, nor did shame
Their valour, but stood firmly without fear :
And from each side the shouts ascending smote the sphere.

BOOK XIV.

1

BUT Nestor not unheeding heard the shout,
Though tarrying at his cups : his words took wing,
And to divine Machaon he spoke out :
“ Asclepius’ son, consider of this thing :
More loudly at the ships young voices ring.
But thou sit on, still drinking as before,
Till for ablution Hecamede bring
Warm streams, and cleanse away the clotted gore,
While from a vantage-ground myself the cause explore.”

2

He said, and of the well-wrought shield laid hold
Of his own son, as in the hut it lay,
The shield of Thrasymedes, warrior bold,
All bright with brass : for the son bore that day
His father’s shield : then grasped he with strong sway
A spear steel-pointed, meet for sturdy blow :
And, standing out of door, ah, well-away !
Saw his friends routed, and the insolent foe
Pursuing, and the wall the Achaians built laid low.

3

As when a great sea broods with dark dumb tide,
In dim foreboding of the swift descent
Of shrilling winds, nor sways to either side
Till Zeus himself have some strong impulse lent,
So the old man was brooding, two ways rent,
Or to the host of Danaans should he fare,
Or to Atrides should his way be bent ;
Till, as he swept his swift thought everywhere,
At last to Atreus' son best seemed it to repair.

4

The hosts meanwhile with carnage filled the field,
And on their flesh the armour gave dread sound,
Pricked with sharp swords and javelins doubly steeled.
Full soon the wounded monarchs Nestor found,
Odysseus, Diomedes, and Atrides, bound
Straight from the ships, by hostile weapons galled :
For far apart the ships were drawn aground
On the sea-beach : the foremost line was hauled
Plain-ward, and at the sterns the place with rampart walled.

5

Broad though it was, no room was on the beach
For the whole fleet, and straitened was the host.
So in set rows they ranged them, each by each,
'Twixt the two headlands, on the line of coast.
Thus, fain to see the battle won or lost,
These, propped on spears, came jointly : sore distressed
Were their faint hearts : whose path the old man crossed,
Nestor, and chilled the heart within their breast :
And him Atrides thus with uttered speech addressed :

6

" Nestor Neleïades, Achaia's pride,
Why com'st thou hither from the slaughterous fray ?
I fear lest Hector's threat be verified,
That from our fleet he ne'er would turn away
Till he should fire our barks, our warriors slay.
So did he boast : and all is now come true.
Alas ! not only Peleus' son to-day
Is wroth with me, but other Argives too ;
Nor care they at the ships the combat to renew."

7

And thus Gerenian Nestor answer made :
" Ay, it has come, nor could e'en Zeus devise
A counterwork : the wall in dust is laid,
Our stay and hope : they at the ships emprise
Fierce war : nor couldst thou, spying with keen eyes,
Tell if the Achaians yield to left or right,
So mixed the deaths ; and clamour mounts the skies.
Wherefore consult we for the best : to fight
I counsel not ; such toil is not for wounded wight."

8

And royal Agamemnon answering said :
" Nestor, if now at the ship-sterns they fight,
Nor aught the rampart nor the trench bestead
Whereat we Danaans toiled with main and might,
'Tis that it seems good in the Thunderer's sight
That far from Argos nameless we decay.
I knew him once full fain to do us right :
Now know I that to Troy he court doth pay,
While that our hands he binds and steals our strength away.

9

" But come, and, as I speak, obey we all.
The foremost vessels ranged beside the main
Drag we, and down to the great ocean haul ;
There keep them moored, till heavenly night again
Return, if haply Troy from war refrain
At night-fall : then may all be seaward brought :
For none are wroth at folk who fly from bane
E'en in the night : better with prescient thought
Escape from ill betimes than linger and be caught."

10

To whom Odysseus with a scowl replied :
" What words, Atrides, from thy lips have fled ?
Wretch ! would that fate had missioned thee to guide
Some meaner host, nor be our army's head,
Seeing Zeus bids us wind war's tangled thread
From youth to age, that we may perish each.
And wouldst thou leave Troy's town unvanquishèd,
Which we so wearily have toiled to breach ?
Hush ! lest some Argive ear should chance to hear that speech ;

11

" Speech, which no true man in his lips would take,
Who in his heart should know sound words to say,
And bear a sceptre, o'er great hosts to shake,
Many as now thou holdest 'neath thy sway.
But for thy plan, I blame it and say nay,
In that thou bidd'st us 'mid the battle's roar
Drag down our ships and moor them in the bay,
Whereby should conquering Troy rejoice the more,
And on our own heads fall destruction great and sore.

12

"For, knowing them dragged down, the host we lead
Would straight look round, nor longer fight maintain.
So should thy plan, O king, much havoc breed."

And royal Agamemnon spoke again :

"Thy words, Odysseus, cut my heart in twain.

Yet would I not Achaia's sons should hale

Unwilling their strong galleys to the main.

But if there be whose rede may more avail,
Speak he, or young or old : fain would I hear his tale."

13

And valiant Diomede made likewise speech :

"Lo, here the man ! he needs no distant quest,

If ye will listen : nor be angry each,

That in this presence I am youthfulest.

But from a sire I spring who with the best

Might mate him, Tydeus : o'er him a great mound

Is heaped at Thebes : for Portheus' bed was blest

With three brave sons, among their peers renowned,
Who in fair Pleuron dwelt and Calydon's high ground.

14

"Agrius, Melas, Ceneus, these were they,

The last my grandsire, bravest of the three.

At home he bode : but Tydeus dwelt away,

To Argos driven : so did the gods decree.

Adrastus' child he wed, and held in fee

A wealthy home : his fields with wheat did swell,

And round them orchards stood, with many a tree :

Rich were his flocks, and he did all excel

In spear-craft : ye yourselves must know that truth I tell.

15

“ Not then for that my fathers lacked desert
Slight ye the word I speak you from my heart.
Up, get we to the war, though sorely hurt,
Yet not to fight ; but past the reach of dart
Halt we, lest haply some have smart on smart ;
There urge we others on to join the fray
Who now in wayward humour stand apart.”
He ended, and they all his word obey,
And set them on their road : Atrides leads the way.

16

Nor did the Shaker of the solid land
Watch without eyes ; but like a veteran grey
He followed them, and seized Atrides' hand,
And thus in wingèd words began his say :
“ Atrides, sure Achilleus' heart to-day
Bounds in his breast, the bloody rout to see
Of Argos, for his wits are reft away :
But let him perish, and Heaven mar his glee !
But thou, not yet the gods are wholly wroth with thee.

17

“ Yet, yet, I ween, Troy's chiefs and generals
Shall scour the plain : thyself to thy content
Shalt see them flying, flying to their walls.”
He said, and shouted, as with speed he went.
Hark how nine thousand or ten thousand, blent
In shock of battle, shout as they engage !
So loud the shout that from his chest he sent,
The Earth-shaker, and the Argives filled with rage,
Each in his bosom's core, unending fight to wage.

18

But Hera, lady of the golden throne,
Beheld, as on Olympus' crest she stood :
There toiling 'mid the fight she saw her own
And her lord's brother, and was glad of mood :
Throned high on Ida, mount of many a flood,
Zeus she beheld ; and bitter rose her bile :
And long on diverse counsels did she brood,
The large-eyed honoured Hera, by what wile
The mind of thundering Zeus most featly to beguile.

19

And in her mind this counsel seemed the best,
To adorn herself, and go to Ida's steep,
If she might tempt him by her side to rest
By her bright hue, and pour delicious sleep
On his keen eyes and heart that schemed so deep :
To her chamber then she went, which with shrewd wit
Hephæstus made, with close-set doors to keep
The entry, each to its strong pillar fit :
The bolt was hid from sight : no god could open it.

20

Entering she closed the door : then cleansed each soil
By sweet ambrosia's help with studious care
From her white flesh, and rubbed it with rich oil,
Celestial, lovely, and of fragrance rare.
Shake it but once upon heaven's brazen stair
And straight o'er earth and sky the steam is shed.
Anointed in such sort, she combed her hair,
And with her hands the locks in order spread,
Beautiful, all divine, round her immortal head.

21

Next donned she her immortal filmy vest,
Which erst Athene made her for her own ;
Buckles of gold attached it to her breast.
Then girt she on a hundred-tasseled zone,
And in her pierced ears pendants fixed, that shone
With triple drops, like mulberries to the sight ;
Round her proud forehead was a fillet thrown,
Beauteous, new-fashioned, like a sunbeam white,
And sandals on her feet she fastened, fair and light.

22

Her tiring o'er, she from the chamber went,
And Aphrodite from the rest apart
Called, and bespoke : " Wilt thou, dear child, consent
To serve me, or refuse, angry at heart
That I with Argos, thou with Troy tak'st part ? "
And Aphrodite spoke with right good will :
" Hera, great queen, who Kronos' daughter art,
Tell what thou wilt : thy wish would I fulfil,
If it be aught I can, nor passing my best skill."

23

Then with a crafty purpose Hera spoke :
" Give me that love, that passion, with whose sway
Thou tamest gods and men as with a yoke :
For to the ends of earth I go straightway
To Ocean, the gods' sire, and Tethys grey,
Who bred me in their house and made me grow,
From Rhea's hand receiving me that day
When keen-eyed Zeus thrust Kronos down below
Under the roots of earth and sea-waves' ebb and flow.

24

"To these I go, to loose an endless strife,
For, angry each with other, they abstain
From mutual love as husband and as wife :
Now should I with my words their will constrain
In mutual fondness to unite again,
Henceforth by them I were beloved and blessed."
And laughing Aphrodite answered fain :
"I cannot, may not, gainsay thy request,
Who sleepest in the embrace of Zeus the first and best."

35

She spoke, and from her bosom loosed her band
Variously wrought, where all enticements lay ;
Therein is love, desire, and whispering bland,
And soft caress, which steals wise hearts away :
Into her hand she gave it, and did say :
"There, take in hand and on thy bosom place
This charm, which all enticement doth convey :
Whate'er thy goal, not vain shall be the race."
And Hera, smiling proud, therewith her breast did grace.

26

So Aphrodite homeward did repair :
But Hera plunged down from Olympus' height :
Passing Pieria and Emathia fair
She sped o'er Thracian mountains, snowy white,
Their topmost crests, nor did on earth alight :
Then stooped from Athos to the billowy deep,
And came to Lemnos, home of Thoas wight ;
And there she met with Death's blood-brother Sleep,
And spoke, and, as she spoke, his hand in hers did keep :

27

"Sleep, monarch of all gods and all mankind,
If e'er with suit of mine thou hast complied,
So do, and ever me thy debtor bind :
Lull me the eyes beneath Zeus' brow so wide
That instant, when I lay me by his side :
A throne, all golden, of unsullied shine
I promise thee : Hephæstus, artist tried,
Shall make it, and a footstool shall be thine,
Where thy fair feet may rest the while thou drinkest wine."

28

Whom thus in answer honeyed Sleep addressed :
"Daughter of Kronos, lady of the skies,
All other gods I well may lay to rest,
E'en streaming Ocean, from whom all things rise ;
Yet dare not I come near Kronion's eyes
Nor make them slumber, save himself command.
Thy hest, I ween, aforetime made me wise
That day when his great offspring, strong of hand,
After Troy town destroyed, was bound from Ilia land :

29

"Then Zeus' too wakeful senses did I steep
In slumber, while thou plottedst ill at heart,
Rousing an angry tempest on the deep :
Then thou to Cos didst carry him, apart
From friends : but Zeus, awaking with a start,
Drove the pale gods before him : me in chief
He sought, and down had hurled me like a dart
Seaward ; but from swift Night I craved relief :
Whom fearing to displease, he ceased, though stung with grief.

30

"And now thou bidd'st me, in that warning's spite,
That yet again in perilous deeds I deal."
Whom yet once more great Hera did incite :
"Why, gentle Sleep, what qualms are these to feel !
Think'st thou Zeus succours Troy with that same zeal
He burned withal for his dear son divine ?
Come, I will give thee one to share thy weal,
The youngest sister of the Graces' line,
Pasithea, for whose love thou evermore dost pine."

31

She ended, and Sleep's eyes with joy did beam,
And of great Hera thus he made demand :
"Now swear to me by Styx' inviolate stream,
And touch the sunlit ocean with one hand,
Laying the other on the foodful land ;
So witness they our compact, mine and thine,
The nether gods who round hoar Kronos stand,
That thou wilt give me that fair Grace divine,
Pasithea, for whose love I evermore do pine."

32

He spoke : nor disobeyed the white-armed dame,
But as he bade her sware, and called the kings
Under the earth, the Titans, each by name :
So when the oath was finished in all things,
From Lemnos and from Imbros, without wings,
They, clad in mist, swiftly their journey make :
Thus reach they savage Ida, nurse of springs,
And Lectos : there they leave the sea, and take
Their way on land : the woods beneath their footfall shake.

33

There Sleep remained, unmarked of Zeus' keen eye,
Climbing a fir-tree, loftiest of all
That then from Ida shot into the sky :
There sat he, shrouded in its leafy pall,
Like a shrill bird, which the gods Chalcis call
And men Cymindis. Hera gained the height
Of Gargarus, topmost ridge of Ida tall.
Cloud-gathering Zeus beheld, and at the sight
Love wrapped him in a veil of measureless delight.

34

He stood before her, named her name, and cried :
"Hera, what brings thee from Olympus' head ?
Nor car nor steeds thou hast, whereon to ride."
And she with guileful purpose answering said :
"I go, the extremest bounds of earth to tread,
To visit Ocean, source of the gods' life,
And Tethys, who erewhile my childhood bred.
Them would I see, to loose an endless strife
That keeps them each from each, as husband and as wife.

35

"My chariot is drawn up at Ida's base,
And steeds, to bear me over wet and dry.
Now hither am I come to do thee grace,
Lest haply thou shouldst blame, if silently
I go my way." Kronion made reply :
"Hera, some other time that task may claim.
Come, join we our embraces, thou and I :
For ne'er for mortal or immortal dame
Did love so wrap me round, and all my spirit tame :

36

“Not for Ixion’s wife, the fair and young,
Who bore Pirithous, like the gods in mind;
Not for bright Danae, from Acrisius sprung,
Who bore me Perseus, noblest of mankind:
Not for old Phoenix’ maid so sore I pined,
Who Minos and great Rhadamanthus bore,
Not for Demeter with the fair locks twined,
Nor for famed Leto, nor thyself before,
As now I long for thee, by love subdued all o’er.”

37

And she with guileful purpose answering said:
“Most dread Kronion, have I heard thee true?
Wouldst thou we twain in slumber should be laid
On Ida’s summit here in open view?
Think what reproach, what slanders should ensue,
Should other god behold us in sleep’s thrall
And quick report it to the immortal crew!
I could not go back to thy palace-hall,
So rising from thine arms: for that were blamed of all.

38

“But if thou willest so, and such thy mind,
Thou hast a chamber which that artist tried
Hephæstus wrought, with fitting doors close joined:
There may we sleep securely side by side.”
And thus to her cloud-gathering Zeus replied:
“Hera, no fear that eye of gods or men
Should see us: for a golden cloud shall hide
Us twain: nor e’en the Sun shall mark us then,
Helios, whose radiant eye most piercing is of ken.”

39

He said, and in his arms he clasped his wife ;
And earth brake forth with herbage manifold,
Saffron, and lotus fresh with dewy life,
And hyacinth soft and thick, which o'er the wold
Raised them ; there lay they in a cloud of gold
Enwrapped, and downward trickled dew-drops sheen :
So peaceful slept Kronion, all controlled
By sleep and love, embracing his fair queen :
Sleep to the Achaian fleet went running, swift and keen.

40

Quickly he sought the Earth-shaker with the news,
Stood by him, and spoke words with wings of wind :
“ Now, great Poseidon, thine occasion use ;
Now give the Danaans fame, while Zeus is blind ;
For my strong spells have bound him, limbs and mind,
By Hera's blandishments to sleep betrayed.”
Then went he to the tribes of human kind,
While *he*, spurred on the Danaan host to aid,
Leapt forth into their van, and loud monition made :

41

“ What, Argives, shall we thus the day forego ?
Shall Hector burn our ships and glory gain ?
In sooth, he says, yea, boasts it shall be so,
Seeing Achilleus doth from war refrain :
Yet scant that loss, if we who here remain
Be stirred to aid each other in the field.
Take we our largest shields of closest grain,
Our brows with beaming helmets safely steeled,
And in our valiant hands our longest javelins wield.

42

"Forward ! myself will lead : nor, spite his vaunt,
Will Hector dare abide when we rush on.
And let the brave who finds his buckler scant
Give it some weakling, and a larger don."
Such words were his : and they obeyed each one :
And the great chieftains, though their wounds did gall,
Odysseus, Diomedes, and Atreus' son,
Passed round the ranks and changed their weapons all :
The large the stronger took, the weaker sort the small.

43

But when their flesh in gleaming brass was clad,
They moved to go : Poseidon led the way ;
In his huge hand a long keen sword he had,
Like lightning : yet therewith he might not slay
The ranks of foemen, but their hearts dismay.
Hector his Trojans ranged on the adverse side.
O, long and dreadful was the battle-fray
Waged by Poseidon there and Hector tried,
While Trojans he with help and he Achæians plied.

44

The sea was dashed up to the huts and fleet
Of Argos ; and they met with a loud yell.
Not sea-waves on the coast so loudly beat
As 'neath the north-wind they from ocean swell,
Nor fire enkindled in a mountain dell
In leaping on the wood so fierce doth roar,
Nor 'mid tall-foliaged oaks the wind so fell
Howls, of all things most terrible in its bore,
As Troy and Argos yelled when each on each they bore.

45

At Aias first his lance brave Hector threw
As front to front he faced him, nor yet erred,
But smote him on the breast, where baldricks two
Ran, one the shield and one the sword to gird ;
These checked the blow. Brave Hector's wrath was stirred
At such miscarriage : back he did retreat,
Shunning his fate : Aias, by anger spurred,
Caught a great stone of those that at their feet
Lay many, as they fought, props of the anchored fleet.

46

He whirled it like a quoit and spun it round ;
O'er the shield's rim, on to the neck it passed.
As some tall oak falls heavily to the ground
Smit by Zeus' thunder, and a sulphurous blast
Swift follows : whoso sees it is aghast,
For Zeus' sore thunderstrokes not soon are healed :
So in the dust fell Hector, tall and vast :
He dropped his lance, and on him fell his shield
And helmet, and all o'er his brazen armour pealed.

47

Hoping a prize, the foe with yells rushed on,
And showered a hail of darts, athirst for blood :
But stab or pierce they could not, ne'er a one,
For round him in a ring Polydamas stood
With great Æneas and Agenor good,
Brave Glaucus, and Sarpedon, Lycia's head ;
And of the rest each succoured as he could,
And his broad shield before his chieftain spread :
And him, reared on their hands, his mates from battle sped.

48

So his steeds reached he, which behind the roar
Of battle stood, with car and charioteer :
Quickly they bare him homeward, groaning sore.
But soon as they came nigh that river clear,
Swift-eddying Xanthus, Zeus' own offspring dear,
They take him out and water on him pour :
He fetched a breath, and did his eyes uprear,
And sat crouched up, disgorging the black gore :
Then back to earth he fell, and gloom his eyes came o'er.

49

Whom when the Argives saw from field retire,
More fierce they rushed, and minded them of fight ;
Far foremost he who called Oileus sire,
Charging with pointed lance, did Satnius smite,
Whom erst on Satnio's banks a Naiad bright
Bore to his father Enops, shepherd swain ;
Him then Oileus' son, spear-famous wight,
Pierced in the flank : he fell, and o'er him slain
Trojans and Danaans there a desperate strife maintain.

50

Then to avenge the dead Polydamas came,
Panthous' brave son, who Prothoënor hit
On the right shoulder : the dart held its aim
On through the back : o'erthrown, the dust he bit.
And the slayer boasted loud, for all to wit :
" Not vainly from the stalwart arm, I ween,
Of Panthous' mighty son that lance did flit ;
Some Argive hath it, who thereon will lean,
And travel by its aid down to the house unseen."

51

He spoke : the Argives listened, smit with pain,
But most of all stout Aias' heart was rent,
Telamon's son ; for next him fell the slain.
At the retiring foe a lance he sent,
Who, springing quick aside, did death prevent :
So 'twas Antenor's son received the spear,
Archelochus : for Zeus his ruin meant :
It smote him where the head and neck come near,
Just at the neck's last joint, and cut the tendons sheer.

52

Head, mouth, and nostrils sooner touched the ground,
Than shins and knees, he falling. As he lay,
Aias outspoke to Panthous' son renowned :
" Think now, Polydamas, and truly say,
Will not this death for Prothoënor's pay ?
No mean man seems he, nor of lineage base,
But brother to Antenor, good in fray,
Or son : for likest that his form and face."
So spake he, knowing well : on Troy came grief apace.

53

Then Acamas, stalking his dead brother round,
Slew Promachus, who sought to drag the slain ;
And o'er him Acamas vaunted with loud sound :
" Not ours alone the labour and the bane,
Proud Argives, but yourselves sometimes are ta'en.
See how my spear hath given up to decay
This Theban, lest my brother's death remain
Long unrevenged : henceforth let each man pray
A brother may survive, to wipe his shame away."

54

He spoke : the Argives listened, smit with pain,
But most of all Peneleos' heart was rent ;
Raging, on Acamas he rushed amain,
Who swerved aside, nor stayed the monarch's hent :
So on Ilioneus his good steel he bent,
The child of Phorbas, lord of cattle fair,
Who of all Trojans born did most content
Hermes, who gave him wealth to spend and spare :
To whom his consort bore Ilioneus, his sole heir.

55

Beneath his brow Peneleos thrust the spear
At the eye's root, and thence the pupil tore ;
Onward through eye and nape the point went sheer :
He sank to earth, his hands spread out before :
Forth flashed Peneleos his keen sword, and shore
Right through the neck, tumbling to earth the head
And helmet both : still the pierced eyeball bore
The javelin fixed : he, like a poppy red,
Lifted the gory prize, and to the Trojans said :

56

"Trojans, my heralds be, and bear my tale
To proud Ilioneus' sire and mother dear :
Go, bid them in their palace weep and wail ;
For ne'er shall Promachus' beloved fere
Welcome her husband home with smiling cheer,
When once again we Argives cross the sea."
Thus boastfully he spoke : a ghastly fear
Took all their hearts, and each one eagerly
Looked round, by what way best the steep of doom to flee.

57

Now tell me, Muses, dwellers on heaven's height,
Who of the Achaians foremost won and wore
The red spoils, when Poseidon turned the fight.
First Telamonian Aias shed the gore
Of Hyrtius, who command o'er Mysians bore :
Likewise Antilochus stout Mermerus slew,
And Phalkes : Mériones their harness tore
From Morys and Hippotion : Teucer true
Sent Prothoön down to death and Periphetes too.

58

But valiant Menelaus in the flank
Pierced Hyperenor, shepherd of his train ;
The steel raged onward, and his entrails drank,
And through the ghastly wound the soul in pain
Went speedily, and on his eyes amain
The death-cloud fell : but Aias most did smite,
Oileus' swift-foot son : for o'er the plain
None else could follow with a step so light,
When warrior hearts grow faint, and Zeus impels to flight.

BOOK XV.

1

BUT when the trench and breastwork they had passed
In flight, and many by the foe had died,
The fliers by their chariots all aghast
And pale with fear were gathered, there to bide :
And Zeus awoke from bright-throned Hera's side
On Ida top, and to his feet did spring :
And Trojans and Achaians he espied,
Those pressed full sore, these fiercely following
Behind them ; and 'mid these there moved Poseidon king.

2

There on the plain lay Hector : round him knelt
His friends : he spat forth blood, and breathed in pain,
Stunned : for no puny hand the stroke had dealt.
The Sire beheld him, and to grieve was fain,
And thus to Hera spoke in threatening strain :
" Ill-plotting, faithless Hera ! 'twas thy wile
Made Hector cease from fight, and scared his train :
I know not if again of thy false guile
Thou shalt not first have fruit, chastised by scourges vile.

3

“Mindest thou not how thou wast hung from high,
And from thy feet I fastened anvils two,
And round thy hands strong shackles I did tie,
Golden, unbroken, to their purpose true?
Thou in the air didst hang in open view,
And grieved and wrathful were the immortals all :
Yet could not their joint force the bond undo :
But whom I caught, I flung him from heaven’s hall,
Till on the earth he lit, half lifeless from the fall.

4

“Nor even thus for godlike Heracles
Slacked I my wrath, whom thou didst lead astray
In thy fell malice o’er the barren seas,
Bending the storms and Boreas to thy sway,
And to fair Cos didst bear him far away.
Him rescued I, and brought to his own seat,
To Argos, after many a weary day.
Remember this, and leave henceforth to cheat,
And see if good thou gain’st from thy fond dalliance sweet.”

5

So he : but large-eyed Hera thrilled with fear,
And thus in wingèd words her lord addressed :
“Witness the Earth, and Heaven that broadens here,
And Styx’ descending waters, mightiest
And direst oath that binds the immortal blest,
And thy dread person, and our young love’s couch,
Which rashly, falsely I would ne’er attest,
Not at my beck Poseidon, I avouch,
Helping the Argive host, makes Troy and Hector crouch.

6

" 'Twas his own heart, I ween, the monarch stirred,
When pitying he beheld the Achaians' need :
But in his ear fain would I speak a word
And counsel him, dread Sire, to obey thy lead."
Smiled the great Father, and did thus succeed :
" If of a surety, large-eyed queen divine,
Henceforth we twain sit 'mid the gods agreed,
Full soon, though otherwise he much incline,
Poseidon's will shall turn, after thy heart and mine.

7

" But now, if verily thy mind be so,
Haste to the tribes of heaven, and hither send
Phœbus and Iris ; her I will to go
To the Argive fleet and bid Poseidon end
Meddling with war, and home his footsteps bend ;
While Phœbus into Hector breathes fresh might,
Drives him to battle, and heals the pangs that rend
And pierce him to the quick, that so in fight
Back fall the Achaian ranks, turned to unmanly flight.

8

" Thus let them fly, retreating as they fly
E'en to Achilleus' ships : he to their aid
Shall send his friend Patroclus, who shall die
By Hector's lance, when many have low been laid,
'Mid them my son Sarpedon, 'neath his blade :
Whereat Achilleus' wrath shall Hector slay :
Then from the ships shall daily rout be made
Of the Ilian host, till Pallas' art betray
Their steep-built city Troy, to be the Achaians' prey.

9

“ But not before will I my rage abate,
Nor other of immortal seed allow
From the crushed Danaan ranks to ward off fate,
Till that be done which I did straitly vow
To grant Pelides, and my head did bow,
That day when at my knees fair Thetis prayed
That I would lift from earth Achilleus’ brow.”
He spoke ; nor white-armed Hera disobeyed,
But to Olympus’ top from Ida journey made.

10

As darts a traveller’s mind, who o’er much ground
Has journeyed, and debates with his shrewd wit,
“ Here shall I go, or there ? ” in thought profound,
With impulse not less swift did Hera flit,
And reached Olympus, where the immortals sit.
Instant they rose, and reached a cup each one.
Passing the rest, from Themis, as was fit,
The cup she took ; for Themis first did run
To greet her, and in haste with winged words began :

11

“ Hera, why com’st thou, e’en as one dismayed ?
Is it thy lord, dread Zeus, that scares thee so ? ”
And Hera to her quest in answer said :
“ Nay, ask not me, fair Themis : thou dost know,
Haughty and stern he is from long ago.
But take thy seat and deal the gods their cheer.
Thou with the other blest shalt learn what woe
Zeus threatens to us all, no joy to hear
For man or god, though now he banquet without fear.”

12

Then ceased imperial Hera and sat down :
Troubled were all the gods : a faint smile wrought
Around her lips, but softened not the frown
'Twixt her dark brows, while thus she spake her thought:
" Mere infants we, right senseless and untaught,
Who rage at Zeus, and would his power arrest
By word or blow : he recks nor heeds us aught,
Sitting apart, and saith that of the blest
In lustihood and strength he past compare is best.

13

" Bear then the ills he sends to you each one,
As Ares suffers now ; for slaughtered lies
Ascalaphus in fight, his best-loved son."
She spoke : and Ares, smiting his broad thighs
With down-dropt hands, in voice of pity cries :
" Be not incensed, ye blest Olympian train,
If to avenge my son I make emprise
There at the ships, though for me fate ordain,
Stricken by Zeus' dire bolt, to lie 'mid heaps of slain."

14

He said, and for his car to Terror and Fear
Gave order, and himself in armour dressed.
Then would some wrath, greater and more severe,
Have burst from Zeus in vengeance on the blest,
But, fearing for herself and for the rest,
Leapt forth Athene, and her throne forsook.
She stripped him of his shield, his helm and crest,
And from his hand the brazen javelin took,
While to grim Ares thus she uttered just rebuke :

15

“ Frantic, demented, thou art clean undone !
Say, hast thou lost all wisdom and all shame,
Or dost thou hear, as hearing thou hadst none ?
Didst thou not hearken to the white-armed dame,
The goddess Hera, who this moment came
From Zeus’ own presence on his mountain seat ?
Wouldst thou, first suffering evils without name,
Back to Olympus hill perforce retreat,
And plant great woe beside, whose fruit we all must eat ?

16

“ Argive and Trojan he will leave, I wis,
And to Olympus come with furious speed,
And seize us one by one, now that, now this,
The guilty alike and who from blame is freed.
Wherefore no more be wroth for that thy seed :
Some wight ere now with mightier force endued
Has fallen, or yet shall fall : hard were the deed
To save from death and slaughter all men’s brood.”
She ceased, and on his throne set Ares, fierce of mood.

17

But Hera called Apollo out of door,
With Iris, herald of the immortal race,
And gave to both the message that she bore :
“ Zeus bids you both to Ida speed apace ;
There when you come and look upon his face,
Whate’er his word commands you, that pursue.”
Thus having said, again she sought her place,
And there sat down ; while eagerly they flew,
And to mount Ida came, which many springs bedew.

18

There found they throned on Gargarus' lofty head
Kronion, scanning the wide prospect o'er ;
Round him a mantling cloud its fragrance shed.
Arrived the presence of great Zeus before
They stood : nor 'gainst them waxed his anger sore,
For that they soon obeyed the hest he spake :
And to swift Iris first he taught her lore :
" Go hence, swift Iris, to Poseidon take
The message I shall give, nor false rehearsal make.

19

" Bid him retire from battle and from fight
Back to the other gods or the great main.
But if he hearken not my words, but slight,
Then let him ponder well in heart and brain
If he have power my onset to sustain
In single fight, albeit his strength be tried :
For I avouch myself of stouter grain
And older ; yet he shrinks not in his pride
From mating him with me, at whom all quail beside."

20

He ended ; nor his charge did Iris fail,
But down from Ida's height to Ilion passed,
As sleet comes flying from the clouds, or hail
As chilly, sped by Boreas' sky-born blast :
So through the space flew Iris, fleet and fast,
And, standing nigh, the Earth-shaker thus addressed :
" Thou whose embrace is round the wide earth cast,
To thee I bring, Poseidon purple-tressed,
From Ægis-bearing Zeus a charge and high behest.

21

“ He bids thee part from battle and from fight,
Back to the other gods or the great main.
But if thou hearken not his words, but slight,
Himself, he threats, down to the battle-plain
Will come, and war shall rage between you twain :
Yet warns he thee that onset not to bide,
For he avers himself of stouter grain
And older ; yet thou shrink'st not in thy pride
From mating thee with him, at whom all quail beside.”

22

To whom the Earth-shaker spoke in high disdain :
“ Heavens ! he is great, but what a vaunt was there !
Would he his equal born by force restrain ?
We three were Kronos' sons, whom Rhea bare,
Zeus, I, and he who makes the shades his care :
Three parts were made, and each received his right.
Myself received the hoar sea for my share
By cast of lot : and Hades had dim night :
And Zeus received broad heaven with clouds and ether bright.

23

“ Earth's continent and high Olympus,—these
Are free to all : wherefore not I my way
Will shape to serve Zeus' pleasure : he at ease
With his own third, though mighty, well may stay.
But let him spare me like some coward to fray
With threat of blows : his sons and daughters he
Had best so menace, who must needs obey
His tyrant voice, reluctant though they be.”
And Iris spoke again, with feet like winds to flee :

24

"Wouldst thou these words, so haughty and so stern,
I bear to Zeus, dread ocean's potentate?
Wilt thou change aught? the brave are good to turn.
Thou know'st, Erinnyes on the elder wait."
And purple-haired Poseidon answered straight:
"Right just, fair Iris, is thy word to hear:
Of prudent messengers comes vantage great.
But my wrath kindles when with speech severe
Another he berates in birth and place his peer.

25

"But now I take shame to me and give way.
Yet would I speak and warn him of this thing:
If, spite of me and Pallas, queen of fray,
Of Hera, Hermes, and Hephæstus king,
He shall show ruth to lofty Troy, nor bring
Her walls to ruin, and let the Argives boast,
Be sure, our wrath will have a cureless sting."
This said, the Earth-shaker left the Achaian host
And to the deep went down: sore missed they whom they lost.

26

And to Apollo the Cloud-gatherer spake:
"Haste, loved Apollo, to brave Hector go:
For he is gone who makes the earth to shake
To the great sea, shunning a mightier foe.
Full sure the gods by Kronos down below
Had heard our din, the battle once begun.
Well—for myself far better is it so,
Ay, and for him, that he ashamed doth shun
My hands; for without sweat the deed had not been done.

27

“Take now my tasseled *Ægis* in firm hold,
And o’er the Achaians wave it till they quake ;
But, Archer, let thy care be Hector bold,
And in his breast a mighty fervour wake,
Till to the ships retreat the Achaians make
And Hellespont : then, wedding word with deed,
Myself in turn will other counsel take,
That they too may respire from their sore need.”
He said, and to his charge Apollo swift gave heed.

28

Down from mount Ida like a hawk he flew,
Swift foe to doves, the fleetest bird on wing ;
There found the son of Priam, Hector true,
Sitting, not lying ; for he felt fresh spring,
And knew his friends : his breath’s thick labouring
Ceased, when Zeus’ will sent strength into his breast :
Whom, standing near, bespoke Apollo king :
“Say, son of Priam, far from all the rest
Why sitt’st thou, faint at heart? sure thou art sore distressed.”

29

And Hector thus with feeble voice returns :
“Who art thou, glorious god, that shown so plain
Dost ask me? Know’st not, at the Achaian sterns,
While my good spear made havoc of his train,
Stout Aias hurled a stone with might and main
Full at my breast, and took my strength away?
I thought, while gasping out my life with pain,
The dead and Hades I should see to-day.”
And the far-darting king in answer thus did say :

30

“Cheer up ! a helper of such stalwart mould
Zeus sends from Ida at thy side to stand,
Phœbus Apollo with the sword of gold,
Who o’er thee have aforetime stretched my hand,
Nor thee alone, but thy dear native land.
But come, and bid thy horsemen toward the fleet
Straight drive their gallant steeds at thy command :
Myself will go before, and for their feet
Make smooth and easy road, and back the Achæians beat.”

31

Thus as he spoke a mighty strength he shed
Through all the warrior, and made light his feet.
As when a stalled horse, high with barley fed,
Breaks tether, and spurning the wide plain runs fleet
Down the familiar river to bathe his heat :
High the head towers, and in his eager race
The long mane dashes from his neck to meet
Whistling the air : he, glorying in his grace,
Flies to the pasturing herd with limber knees apace :

32

Thus Hector feet and knees as nimbly plied,
When the god’s voice he hearkened and obeyed.
As some tall stag or goat on mountain side,
Cheering and chasing, dogs and men invade :
The rock’s steep platform and the tangled shade
Save the scared beast, nor may it well be neared :
When sudden ’mid the din and clamour made
Springs on their path a lion with thick beard,
And men and hounds, though keen, are scattered all and feared.

33

So at the first the Danaans in a mass,
Striking with sword and steely lance, came on :
But through the ranks when they saw Hector pass,
Down to their feet they dropped their hearts each one ;
And Thoas them bespoke, Andræmon's son,
The Ætolian, skilled the javelin to let fly,
Or stand and fight : in council few or none
Surpassed him, when men's wits in talking vie :
Who 'mid them thus harangued, and spoke right prudently :

34

"Heavens ! a great wonder this my eyes have seen :
Hector has 'scaped from death, and risen again
Up from the ground, when each one hoped, I ween,
By Telamonian Aias he was slain.
But 'twas some god did succour and sustain
Our foe, who many a knee hath made give way,
E'en as he now will do : for not in vain,
Unsent by Zeus, he fiercely parts the fray.
But come, obey we all, and do as I shall say.

35

"Send we the rabble to the navy back,
While we ourselves, who count for noblest here,
Stand firm, if haply we may ward the attack,
Each to the foe presenting a raised spear.
Though keen his soul, I trow he then will fear
The Danaans' serried mass to penetrate."
He said ; and they obeyed him and gave ear.
So these, round Aias and Idomeneus great,
Teucer, and Mériones, and Meges, Ares' mate,

36

Stood firm, and, rallying of their martial train
The bravest, Hector and his host defied,
While to the fleet the crowd returned again.
On plunged the Trojans: Hector with long stride
Went foremost: before whom Apollo hied,
Veiled in a cloud, the Ægis in his right,
Dread, shaggy, glorious, which Hephæstus tried
Fashioned for Zeus to scatter men in flight:
Which holding in his hand, he led the host to fight.

37

In mass the Argives faced them: from both bands
Rose a shrill cry: the arrows from the string
Kept leaping: darts rained thick from valiant hands:
Some in the flesh of warriors fixed a sting;
Some, vainly thirsting, robbed of half their fling
Ere they drank gore, stood rooted in the mould.
So while Apollo held unwavering
The Ægis in his hand, the shafts took hold
Of either host, and men were falling manifold.

38

But when that Ægis in the Danaans' face
He shook, and cried aloud, their souls 'gan creep
Within them, and their valour ebb'd apace.
As two wild beasts scatter a fold of sheep
Or herd of oxen, in the midnight deep,
With sudden rush, the while the herdman strays,
So fled the Achæians, huddling in a heap;
For Phoebus scared them, and gave Hector praise.
Then warrior warrior slew along the battle's maze.

39

Hector Arcesilas and Stichius killed,
That, leader of Bœotia's brass-clad train,
This, comrade of Menestheus iron-willed.
Brave Iasus was by Æneas slain,
And Medon : Medon, of Oileus' strain
A bastard, Aias' brother, who did won
In Phylace, because of murder-stain
From a near kinsman : Iasus led on
The Athenian host to fight : men called him Sphelus' son.

40

Polydamas laid Mekistes with the dead,
In front of fight : Polites Echius slew,
Agenor Clonius : Paris as he fled
Struck Deïochus, and drove the javelin through.
So while these stripped the slain, the Achaian crew
On trench and stake-work multitudinously
Dashed, and perforce within the rampart drew.
But Hector warned the Trojans with loud cry,
To rush upon the ships and pass the plunder by.

41

" But whom elsewhere than at the ships I sight,
Death shall be his that moment, nor for him
The funeral pyre shall brother and sister light :
Dogs at Troy wall shall tear him limb from limb."
He spoke, and, leaning o'er the chariot's rim,
Lashed the steeds' shoulders with his sounding thong,
While to the ranks he pealed his menace grim :
They, shouting loud themselves, a furious throng,
With a divine cry drove their harnessed steeds along.

42

Phœbus Apollo, marching in the fore,
The moat's steep sides down tumbled with his feet
Into the depth, and bridged a passage o'er
Long and full broad, far as a lance can fleet,
When some strong warrior fain would show a feat
Of spear-craft. There they streamed by phalanxes ;
Holding his precious *Ægis*, as was meet,
First Phœbus marched, and overturned with ease
The rampart, as a child the sand beside the seas,

43

Who, having built a house of sand for sport,
With hands and feet destroys it, sporting yet :
So thou, bright Phœbus, didst the toil cut short
Of Argos, and make void their pain and sweat.
They, turned to flight, back to their vessels get,
And there, each heartening each, Olympus-ward
Raising their hands, the gods with prayers beset :
Gerenian Nestor chief, Achaia's guard,
Thus prayed, his hands outstretching to the welkin starred :

44

" Zeus sire, if e'er in Argos' fruitful field
One, burning thigh of ox or sheep, did pray
For safe return, and thou assent didst yield,
Bethink thee and avert the ruthless day,
Nor 'neath Troy's hand let Argos thus decay."
He said : Zeus loudly thundered at the word,
Listening the prayer of the Neleïan gray :
But the glad Trojans, when Zeus' mind they heard,
Sprang fierce on the foe, and more to fight were stirred.

45

As a great wave from the broad-furrowed deep
O'er a ship's side comes bursting, when a squall
Blows fierce; for then the billows rise most steep;
So, shouting, surged the Trojans o'er the wall.
Driving their steeds within, to fight they fall
With pointed spears, these from the chariot-seat,
Those mounted high upon the galleys tall
With long straight poles which lay aboard the fleet
Fitted for naval fight, with iron shod complete.

46

But brave Patroclus, while without the fleet
Round the strong wall the armies joined in fight,
Within Eurypylus' hut still kept his seat,
Cheering with pleasant talk the wounded wight,
And salved the hurt, and made its anguish light:
But when he saw the Trojans surging rise
High o'er the wall, and Argos turned to flight,
A cry of pain he gave, and smote his thighs
With down-dropt hands, and thus in voice of pity cries:

47

"Eurypylus, no more, though sore thy need,
Here may I bide: great strife hath risen to-day.
Thee let thy servant cheer, the while I speed
To Peleus' son and urge him to the fray.
Who knows if, Heaven assisting, I may sway
His stubborn heart? a friend's advice is good."
He spoke, and hurried on his feet away.
'Gainst the foe's rush the Argives firmly stood,
Yet might not drive them back, though less their multitude:

48

Nor yet the sons of Troy could penetrate
The Danaan ranks, nor reach the ships they sought :
But as a line makes a ship's timber straight
Plied by the hand of skilful workmen, fraught
With all device and by Athene taught,
So did the battle stretch an even line.
Some here, some there, they at the galleys fought :
But Hector coped with Aias the divine,
And for one ship they twain had toil and bitter tyne.

49

Yet could not Hector Aias backward bear
And fire his ship, nor Aias from the ground
Beat Hector off, since Heaven had placed him there.
From Aias' spear his death Caletor found
E'en as he waved a firebrand : with a sound
He tumbled, and the torch apart did fly.
But Hector, when he saw that chief renowned,
His kinsman, dead before the black ship lie,
To Troy and Lycia called with far-resounding cry :

50

"Troy, Lycia, Dardany, close-fighters true !
Flinch not as yet, seeing our need is great,
But save Caletor, lest the Achaian crew
Despoil him, fallen in this our fell debate."
He spoke, and aimed his lance at Aias straight ;
Whom yet he missed, but smote his worthy fere,
Stout Lycophron, who dwelt within his gate,
Exiled from home for bloodshed : the sharp spear
Reached him at Aias' side, and lodged above the ear.

51

From the ship's stern he fell at Aias' feet,
Who shuddered chill, and to his brother said :
" Gone is our trusty comrade, Teucer sweet,
Stout Mastor's son, whom from Cythera fled
Like our own sire at home we honoured.
Hector has killed him : can thy shafts' sharp sting,
Thy bow that Phœbus gave thee, nought bestead ? "
Then to his side ran Teucer, and did bring
His quiver in his hand and bow of supple spring.

52

Swift on Troy's ranks he launched the strokes of fate ;
Cleitus he slew, Peisenor's generous seed,
Noble Polydamas' right valiant mate :
The reins in hand, he to the car gave heed,
Turning it where the ranks most rage and bleed,
For Hector's sake and Troy's : but on his head
Came woe, nor was there help in his great need :
The fell shaft pierced his nape : he tumbled dead :
Jangling the empty car, the horses backward sped.

53

His fall was noted of his comrade brave,
Who, instant running, checked the horses' flight.
Them to Astynous' care eftsoons he gave
With many a charge to watch with wary sight
And keep them near, while he returned to fight.
Then a fresh shaft at Hector armour-steeled
Aimed Teucer, and had stayed that valiant wight
From further show of prowess in war's field ;
But not from Zeus' deep heart his purpose was concealed.

54

Zeus guarded Hector, and marred Teucer's pride :
E'en as the string was drawing 'gainst the foe
In twain he snapped it : the barbed shaft aside
Glanced, and the numb hand let the weapon go :
And Teucer, cowed, bespoke his brother : " Lo,
Some god there is who all to clips the wing
Of this our battle : he has dashed the bow
From out my hand, and snapped the new-twined string
Which I this morn made fast, to bear the arrows' spring."

55

To whom replied the Telamonian chief :
" Sweet brother, let them lie there on the ground,
The goodly bow and the thick arrow-sheaf,
Since now some god thy weapons doth confound
Who wills not Argos' sons to be renowned ;
But spear in hand and shield on shoulder take ;
So fight with Troy, and rouse thy friends around :
Nor without toil, though conqueror, let her make
Prize of our well-benched ships, but battle's flame awake."

56

He said : and Teucer to his hut took back
His unstrung bow, and o'er his shoulders threw
A four-fold buckler, proof 'gainst all attack :
Then o'er his brows a well-wrought helm he drew,
Crested with waving horsehair, dire to view :
So ran he forth, and stood by Aias' side,
A spear in hand, with iron pointed true.
But when the bow thus crippled Hector spied,
To Lycia and to Troy with ringing shout he cried :

57

“Troy, Lycia, Dardany, close-fighters keen !
Be men, my friends, and mind you of your might
Here at the ships : for sooth my eyes have seen
The bow and arrows of yon valiant wight
Crippled by Zeus : full palpable to sight
Zeus’ help to man, to whom he would convey
Chiefest renown, or in the field of fight
Bring low and leave forlorn, e’en as to-day
He succours us, and bids the Argive force decay.

58

“Stand firm and fight : but whoso of our band
By thrust or javelin-shot his fate shall meet,
E’en let him die : to die for fatherland
Is no unseemly end for such, I weet :
For safe shall be his wife and children sweet,
His land unharmed, his homestead without breach,
Let but the Achaians to their home retreat.”
Thus with his words he stirred the blood of each :
On the other side stout Aias to his men made speech :

59

“Argives, for shame ! better or die this day
Or save your lives and shield the ships from bane.
Hope ye, if Hector make our fleet his prey,
That each afoot his fatherland will gain ?
Or hear ye not brave Hector cheer his train,
Yearning to fire our ships, if so he can ?
Not now to dance but battle on the plain
He calls them : but for us no wiser plan
Than heart and hand to join in combat, man with man.

60

“Far better once for all to die or live
Than inch by inch in combat to decay
Here at the ships, while with worse men we strive.”
This said, he heartened each the man to play.
Then Hector Perimedes’ son did slay,
The Phocians’ chief: Antenor’s offspring true,
Laodamas, by Aias slaughtered lay :
Polydamas Cyllenian Otus slew,
Comrade of Phyleus’ son, chief of the Epeian crew.

61

On Meges rushed : Polydamas aside
Swerved, so he missed him : for not Phœbus willed
That Panthous’ son should perish ’neath war’s tide.
He, striking Crœsmus’ breast, his life-blood spilled :
Clanged the dead corpse : the killer stripped the killed.
On whom amain rushed Dolops, valiant wight,
Laomedon’s grandson, in all spear-craft skilled
(His sire was Lampus, man of noblest might) :
Who upon Meges’ shield with levelled lance did smite :

62

But the thick cuirass, with its hollows fit,
Saved him, which Phyleus brought from Ephyre :
His kingly host Euphetes gave him it
’Gainst enemies’ wounds a sure defence to be :
Which from his son’s frame then made death to flee.
With beechen javelin Meges charged the foe,
Struck full the brazen helm’s extremity,
And cut the horsehair crest off : tumbled low
There in the dust it lay, with crimson all aglow.

63

While yet he fought, and hoped for battle's luck,
Brave Menelaus came, to lend his aid,
And with side blow unseen the shoulder struck :
Through the broad breast the spear its passage made,
Still yearning on : he prone on earth was laid.
On rushed the conquerors, eager to forestall
The dead man's arms : but Hector did upbraid
His kinsmen, all and sundry : most of all
On valiant Melanippus his reproof did fall.

64

He in Percote, while the foes afar
Were tarrying, fed his trailing-footed kine ;
But when the Danaan ships brought nigh the war,
To Ilion came, and 'mid Troy's sons did shine,
Dwelling near Priam, graced like his own line :
Whom Hector thus bespoke in chiding strain :
" So slack, fair cousin ? does that heart of thine
Distress thee not to see our kinsman slain ?
Lo there, how keen they strive lost Dolops' arms to gain !

65

" Come on ! with Argos hand to hand this day
We fight till we destroy her or she smite
Our lofty town and make the host her prey."
He spoke, and with him marched the godlike wight.
But mighty Aias roused the Achaians' might :
" Be men, my friends, and to your hearts recall
A generous shame, as side by side ye fight :
Who feel that shame more often 'scape than fall ;
But glory from the flier comes none, nor help at all."

66

He spoke : and they too burned to quell the foe,
And laid his words to heart, and fenced the fleet
With iron wall : upon them Zeus let go
The Trojans. Menelaus stirred the heat
Of Nestor's son : " Antilochus, I weet,
None younger is than thou of all our crew,
None valianter, nor swifter of his feet :
Couldst thou leap forth and strike some Trojan through?"
Whom having kindled thus, himself again withdrew.

67

The youth sprang forward and his bright spear sped,
First peering about him ; and the foe gave ground,
He throwing : not in vain the weapon fled :
Bold Melanippus' breast it straightway found
As battleward he bore him : with a sound
He fell to earth : loud clashed his armour there :
On rushed the conqueror, e'en as darts a hound
On a slain fawn, which, bounding from its lair,
Falls by the hunter's shaft, stricken at unaware :

68

So, Melanippus, rushed on thee thy foe,
To strip thy arms ; but 'scaped not Hector's sight,
Who met him face to face, in no wise slow :
But Nestor's son abode not, though in fight
No laggard ; but, as turns some beast to flight,
Herdsman or dog among the cattle slain,
Ere yet the neighbours gather in their might,
So fled Antilochus : Troy's sons amain
And Hector with fell din their bitter javelins rain.

69

Then, having gained his friends, he turned and stood.
Troy's sons the while, like lions rawly fed,
Poured on the 'ships, and Zeus' command made good :
For in their breasts new courage still he bred,
While Argos' heart he palsied and struck dead.
For 'twas his will that Hector with fierce fire
Should seize the fleet, and so be perfected
All Thetis' prayer : for therefore stayed the Sire,
From an enkindled bark to see the blaze aspire.

70

That done, his purpose was to cause retreat
Of Trojans from the ships, and praise confer
On Argos' children : wherefore 'gainst the fleet
Hector Priamides he yet did stir,
Though small that warrior's need of goad or spur,
Than who not fire in densest mountain glade
Nor spear-armed Ares e'er raged dreadfuller :
Foam started from his lips, and 'neath the shade
Of his tremendous brows his eyne with lightnings played :

71

And fearfully the while did glance and wave
The crested helm that on his temples sate,
There as he fought : for Zeus from ether gave
Him succour, still intent to make him great
Beyond the rest : for all too brief the date
His destiny ordained him : o'er his head
E'en then was lowering dark the day of fate,
The day by Pallas Athenæa sped,
When by Pelides' arm he should lie cold and dead.

72

Full fain was he the ranks of men to break,
Thrusting where arms he saw of fairest show
And densest numbers, but no breach could make
In that firm mass, though fierce his spirit's glow :
Tower-like they stood compacted 'gainst the foe,
As rock unscalable beside the deep,
Which braves the shrill-toned tempests where they blow
And the big waves that tumble in a heap :
So 'gainst the foe's assault her ground did Argos keep.

73

But he, with gleaming fire ablaze all o'er,
Dashed at that mass, and fell on them with might,
As when a wave swoln by the wild wind's bore
Down from the clouds upon a ship doth light,
And the whole hulk with scattering foam is white,
And through the sails all tattered and forlorn
Roars the fell blast : the seamen with affright
Shake, for from death a hand-breadth they are borne :
So in the Achaians' breast the heart was rent and torn.

74

E'en as on kine comes down a lion fell,
That throngingly in marshland meadow feed,
With them a skilless herd who knows not well
To fight, should wild beast bid a heifer bleed :
He with the van or rear doth still proceed
By turns : the spoiler on the midst doth fall
And clutches one : in terror o'er the mead
Scatter the rest : so fled the Achaians all,
When father Zeus and Hector did their souls appal.

75

And one alone upon the plain lay dead
By Hector's arm of all that following ;
Brave Periphetes, in Mycenæ bred,
Offspring of Copreus, him who went to bring
Charge to Alcides from Eurystheus king :
So from a meaner sire a nobler son,
Versed in all arts above his peers, did spring,
With wisdom dowered, expert to fight or run ;
Who for great Hector then surpassing glory won.

76

Turning, he struck upon the buckler's rim,
Slung from his back, to keep him safe from wound,
So caught his foot and fell : the helmet grim
That crowned him, as he fell, gave dreadful sound.
Hector perceived the chance, and with a bound
Came up, and through his breast the lance's blade
Drove, and so slew him, while his friends stood round ;
Nor they, though grieving, could afford him aid,
For of great Hector's arm themselves were sore afraid.

77

To the ships' heads they came, and shelter found
Behind the barks that stood in foremost row.
On streamed the Trojans : Argos, yielding ground,
From the first line went sullenly and slow,
And by the huts stood firm, to wait the foe,
Not scattering o'er the plain, for shame and fear
Withheld them : each to each kept clamouring so :
And Nestor the Gerenian, worthy peer,
To each man sued in the name of his own parents dear :

78

"Be men, my friends, and to your mind recall
Shame, as ye think what other folk will say :
Let children, wives, possessions, parents, all,
In each one's recollection live to-day,
Be they alive, or lying 'neath the clay.
For their dear sakes, though not before your sight
In bodily form they stand, I sue, I pray,
Keep manfully your post, nor turn to flight !"
So he, and with his words enkindled each man's might.

79

Then from their eyes Athene rolled afar
The heaven-sent mist, and showed in clearest day
The leaguered ships, and all the doubtful war.
Then Hector, good at battle's need, saw they,
And all his comrades, whoso stood away
Back from the fight, and whoso toiling sore
About the vessels closed in battle-fray.
But mighty-hearted Aias cared no more
To stand where others stood, and combat as before :

80

He o'er the ships went striding in his strength,
And in his hands a mighty pole he plied,
Studded with nails, of twice ten cubits' length.
As when a man on horses went to ride
Four, chosen from a herd, abreast doth guide
To a great town from off the meadow lea,
On the high road, while men on either side
And women stand agape : right deftly he
From one to other vaults, and featly on they flee :

81

So o'er the decks of many a swift-winged bark
Went Aias striding, and his voice did ring
To heaven, as loud he bade the Achaians hark
And to the huts and fleet their succour bring.
Nor Hector yet made further tarrying
Where thickly massed the mailèd Trojans stood,
But as the tawny eagle fierce doth spring
On a great flock of birds, that by the flood,
Or be they geese or cranes or cygnets, seek their food,

82

So with a forward impulse Hector flew
At a dark ship : Zeus pushed him on behind
With mighty hand, and eke impelled his crew
To back him : and once more the combat joined
Full fiercely at the fleet : of toughest kind
Thou wouldst have called those hosts, so manfully
Each fought with each : yet not alike their mind :
For to the Achaians hope was none to fly
From that o'erwhelming ill, but there they looked to die :

83

But hope was lively in each Trojan breast
To burn the ships and their defenders slay :
So hoping, each on each the fighters pressed.
On a ship's stern brave Hector hand did lay,
The ship that did Protesilas convey
To Troy, but homeward bore him ne'er again.
'Twas round his ship Argos and Troy that day
Joined hand to hand in battle, nothing fain
To wait for arrow-shower or fall of javelin rain :

84

But standing face to face with one set will
With hatchet and keen axe they dealt the wound,
And mighty swords, and pikes prepared to kill :
And many a goodly falchion iron-bound,
By warrior swayed, fell heavy to the ground
From hand or shoulder, as the fight grew stark,
While with blood-rivers the black earth was drowned :
But Hector, grasping still that gallant bark,
His hand upon the stern, cried out for Troy to hark :

85

“ Bring hither fire, and shout the war-cry loud !
See, Zeus hath given us this all-precious day,
To burn the ships, which, not by Heaven avowed,
Have wrought much ill, thanks to those beards of grey,
Who, oft as I the battle would array
At the ships’ sterns, me and my host controlled,
Nor let us march ; but if ’twas Zeus made stray
Our senses then, to-day he makes us bold.”
He spake : and on the foe they sprang with rage tenfold.

86

But Aias, for the javelins pressed him sore,
Stayed not, but backed him, deeming death was near,
To a long bench, and left the vessel’s floor.
There, keeping watch, he stood, and with his spear
Beat off the foe, still shouting loud and clear :
“ Friends, Danaan heroes, Ares’ servants all !
Be men, dear hearts, and let your worth appear :
Have we a guard behind, if back we fall,
Or hope we in our rear some firmer, stronger wall ?

87

"Ours is no city with stout turrets fit,
Whence we might fight, with fresh enforcement manned :
No—in the midst of steel-clad foes we sit,
Hemmed by the sea, far from our own dear land :
No hope from courtesies, but strength of hand."
He said, and with his lance kept sentry true :
Oft as a foe rushed on with kindled brand
He caught him with the point, and pierced him through :
So at the vessels' front twelve in close fight he slew.

BOOK XVI.

1

So these were fighting for the well-benched bark :
Meantime Patroclus came to Peleus' son,
Pouring warm tears, e'en as a fountain dark
Which down a smooth sheer rock doth blackly run.
Achilleus saw, and pityingly begun :
" What makes Patroclus sad and sorrow-faced,
Like girl that by her mother's side runs on,
And, pulling at her mantle, checks her haste,
Looking with tearful eyes till that she be embraced ?

2

" E'en thus, dear heart, thy tender tears run down.
Hast aught to tell the Myrmidons or me ?
Ill tidings hast thou heard from Phthia town ?
Men say, Menœtius yet the light doth see,
And hoary Peleus, living yet is he,
Who, were they dead, might make our tears to flow.
Or pitiest thou the Argives, that they dree
At the smooth ships their lot of righteous woe ?
Disclose it, nor conceal, that both alike may know."

3

Him didst thou answer thus, Patroclus knight :
“ Flower of Achaia, Peleus’ valiant seed,
Frown not : such sorrow doth the Achaians smite.
Lo, all who sometime were their best at need,
Lying at yonder vessels, made to bleed
By shot or stab, their own ill fortune rue.
Struck with a dart is stalwart Diomede :
Stabbed is Odysseus, Agamemnon too :
Hurt is Eurypylus’ thigh ; a shaft hath pierced it through.

4

“ Sage leeches, skilled in pharmacy divine,
Tend on their wounds : but thou art stubborn still,
Achilleus. Ah ! may ne’er that wrath of thine,
Too haughty heart, Patroclus’ bosom fill !
Shouldst thou not now from Argos ward off ill,
What man from thee hereafter shall see good ?
Not Peleus got thee, man of iron will,
Nor Thetis bare : thy mother was the flood,
Thy sire the craggy steep, for ruthless is thy mood.

5

“ But, if some heavenly warning thou dost dread,
Yet send me forth, and place beneath my care
The Myrmidons, if I may aught bestead :
And give me for my frame thine arms to wear
That Troy may think me thee, and so forbear
The combat, and our friends from battle’s heat
Awhile may breathe, respiring in cool air :
Right soon the tired invader we shall beat
Townward, ourselves untired, from hut and leaguered fleet.”

6

So prayed he, blinded fool ; for he was doomed
For his own hurt, his own ill end to pray.
And swift Achilleus, wroth at heart, resumed :
“ Ah, woe, Patroclus, what a word to say !
No prophecy of old my soul doth fray,
No word from Zeus my mother did arede ;
But heavy grief doth on my spirit weigh,
That a man's equal should resume his meed,
And rob him of his own, all for high-handed greed :

7

“ Great grief it is that, after all my toil,
The girl, choice tribute from the Achaian band,
Won by my spear among her city's spoil,
King Agamemnon wresteth from my hand,
As I were some poor stranger in the land.
But let the past be past : it is not well
To keep the flame of choler away fanned ;
Yet thought I ne'er to bate my anger fell,
Till by my own ship's stern the shout of war should swell.

8

“ Go, don my arms, and fieldward lead my host,
Since of a truth the Trojans in dark cloud
Gloom o'er the vessels : by the bare sea-coast
Hemmed in, a scanty breadth of space allowed,
The Argives pant, while Troy's whole city proud
Sweeps on them : for they see not glittering
My helmet's front : full soon in huddled crowd
Their dead would choke the torrent, if the king
Atreides were my friend : but now the camp they ring.

9

“ No more in Diomedes’ hand the spear
Raves like a fiend, to rid the ships from thrall :
Nor longer Agamemnon’s voice I hear
From his cursed throat : ’tis slaughtering Hector’s call,
Heartening his men, breaks round me : clamouring all
They flood the plain, and helpless Argos spurn.
Nathless, Patroclus, fiercely on them fall
And save the ships from havoc, lest they burn
The fleet with blazing fire, and cut off sweet return.

10

“ But now obey, as I my speech ordain :
So shalt thou win me honour and much pride
And high renown from all the Danaan train,
And they shall give me back the lovely bride
Reft from my arms, and goodly gifts beside.
The onset quelled, hie homeward : nay, e’en though
He give thee glory, Zeus who thunders wide,
Not without me yearn thou with our brave foe
To combat : doing thus, thou bring’st me yet more low.

11

“ Nor in the joy of war and chivalry,
Slaughtering the Trojans, Troyward lead the way,
For fear some god assail thee from the sky
(Apollo loves them well) : but soon as day
Dawns on the ships, then leave them to their fray.
Ah, Zeus, Athene, Phœbus, mighty powers !
Would that no Trojan might escape decay,
No Danaan, none, while safety still were ours !
Then might we twain unweave that coronal of towers.”

12

So these : but Aias might no longer bide :
Zeus' will subdued him, and the Trojans stout,
Hurling : his helm, with ceaseless javelins plied,
Harsh music made his temples round about :
His good left arm, that held the buckler out,
Flagged : yet they might not thrust him from his place :
Thick pantings shook him still : with many a gout
Sweat from his limbs ran down : he had no space
For breathing : all around he was in evil case.

13

Now tell me, Muses, dwellers on heaven's height,
How on the ships first fell the hostile flame.
Hector on Aias' ashen spear did smite
Just where the head joins on, and lopped the same :
The warrior shook his javelin, so made tame :
Down dropped the tinkling head in idle sort.
And Aias knew, that spirit without blame,
And shuddered at Heaven's hand : so Zeus cuts short
The counsels of their war, and yields to Troy support.

14

Back from the darts he drew : with fire they ply
The swift-winged ship : at once the blaze has spread,
And now above the stern the flames ride high :
Achilleus smote on both his thighs and said
To brave Patroclus : " Rouse thee, nobly-bred,
Bold warrior with the chariot ! lo, I see
Among the ships the hostile fire make head :
Quick, lest they burn, and means be none to flee :
Put on thine arms with speed : the mustering leave to me."

15

He heard, and armed himself in steel complete.
Around his legs the cuishes first he placed,
Goodly, with clasps of silver furnished meet :
That done, he girt the corslet round his waist,
Achilleus' corslet, gay and starry-faced :
Then took the sword, with bright nails riveted,
Took, too, the vast close-welded shield, and laced
The well-wrought helm about his noble head ;
The horse-hair crest above waved menacing and dread.

16

Two javelins took he, for his handling fit :
Only of all Achilleus' arms his spear
He took not, for none else could brandish it :
Achilleus' self alone that weight could rear,
The Pelian ash, which to his father dear
Gave Cheiron, many a hero's death to be :
Then bade Automedon put the steeds in gear,
Whom next to fierce Achilleus honoured he,
For trustier wight was none the shock of war to dree.

17

So 'neath the yoke Automedon did pair
The fleet-foot horses, like the winds for speed,
Xanthus and Balius, whom Podarge bare,
The Harpy, as she grazed the verdant mead
By Ocean stream, conceived from Zephyr's seed.
By whom in traces Pedasus he tied :
Achilleus homeward drove that gallant steed,
What time he did Eëtion's spoil divide :
And he, though mortal, walked by those immortals' side.

•

18

Achilleus, striding on, arrayed for fight
His Myrmidons : and they, like wolves in mood,
Raw-feeding, round whose breasts is quenchless might,
Who having slain an antlered stag for food
Gorge him, while each one's jaw drips red with blood :
In pack they rush, to lap with tongues so thin
From a dark spring the surface of the flood,
Out-belching gore and carnage : strong within
And dauntless is their heart, and stretched their belly's skin :

19

E'en thus the Myrmidonian leaders good
Round the brave squire of swift Æacides
Were strengthened : in the midst Achilleus stood,
Horses and warriors stirring like a breeze.
Full fifty were the ships that o'er the seas
Achilleus led to Ilion : and a band
Of fifty rowers had seats in each of these :
Five trusted chiefs he chose for their command,
While o'er them all himself was master with strong hand.

20

Of the first troop the rule Menesthius bare,
Son of Spercheios, heaven-descended flood,
Whom Peleus' daughter, Polydora fair,
Bore, mixing mortal with immortal blood :
But Borus' son was he in name, who wooed
And won her before men with ample dower :
The next was ordered by Eudorus good,
Whom Polymela erst in secret hour,
Daughter of Phylas, bore, child of her maiden bower.

21

The slayer of Argus eyed her as she graced
The choir of Artemis with dance and song,
And, passion-smit, in stolen love embraced :
And a fair son she brought him forth ere long,
Eudorus, swift of foot, in battle strong.
But when the goddess of the travail-bed
Had oped his eyes the sun's bright beams among,
The dame Echeclus, son of Actor, wed,
And, countless dower paid down, home to his palace led :

22

But ancient Phylas nursed and reared the child
With fondest love, as it were born his heir.
And the third band beneath Peisander filed,
Mæmalides, with whom might none compare,
After Menœtius' son, the lance to bear.
Chief of the fourth was Phœnix, horseman grey :
Of the fifth band Alcimedon had care.
And now, when men and chiefs in just array
Stood ranged, a fiery word Achilles straight did say :

23

" Now, gallants, mind you with what threatening speech
Ye menaced Troy here at the vessels tall,
While I was wroth, and did upbraid me each :
' Ill-minded man ! thy mother's milk was gall :
Cruel, to keep us at the ships in thrall !
Since such thy mood, far better homeward go.'
So spake ye, gathering round me, one and all :
See here the mighty field ye longed for so !
Enkindle each his heart, and strike a downright blow."

24

So with the fervour of his voice he stirred
The heart and spirit within each : and they
Thronged closer, when his kingly hest they heard.
Look how a man stone upon stone doth lay,
Walling a house, to keep the winds away :
So helm and buckler each on each were pressed :
Shield jostled shield, casque casque, man man that day :
On the bright helmet-cone each waving crest
Its fellow touched : so closely side by side they dressed.

25

Before the rest two chiefs, in heart as one,
Their limbs in armour for the combat cased,
Patroclus lord and prince Automedon,
In the front rank to battle undisgraced.
Then to his hut Achilleus went with haste,
And of a coffer rich and beautiful
Lifted the lid, which silver Thetis placed
On shipboard for his use, of raiment full,
Mantles that screen the wind, and rugs of softest wool.

26

There lay a well-wrought goblet : none but he
Of mortals drank therefrom the dusky wine,
Nor poured libation thence to deity
Save only to great Zeus, the Sire divine.
This, taken from the chest, with sulphur fine
He cleansed, then washed in water from the spring,
Laved his own hands, and so drew forth the wine,
And, as he poured it, in the enclosure's ring
Prayed, looking to the skies, nor 'scaped the almighty King :

27

“ Pelasgian Zeus, who holdest thy far seat
In the bleak air of chill Dodona, where
Thy seers the Selli dwell, with unwashed feet,
Couched on the ground ! thou hast vouchsafed my prayer,
Hast honoured me, and sent withal despair
On Argos’ sons : so grant me audience now :
I ’mid my vessels still from fight forbear,
Yet thither send my well-loved friend : do thou
Bid glory meet him there, and lift on high his brow.

28

“ O nerve his heart ! O keep it strongly manned
There in his breast, that Hector’s self be made
To know if singly with his own right hand
My squire can fight, or then alone his blade
Resistless raves, when I am there to aid,
Walking the battle at his side ! but when
He from the fleet has driven their murderous raid,
Return him scatheless to my ships again,
Him and his arms entire, and these his valiant men !”

29

So spake he praying, and Zeus heard his call,
And half the Sire vouchsafed, and half denied :
To roll destruction from the vessels tall
He gave, but not in safety home to ride.
Thus having made libation due, and cried
To father Zeus, back to his hut again
He turned him, and the goblet laid aside ;
Then at the hut’s door stood, and still was fain
Argos and Troy to see the dreadful fight darraïn.

30

And by Patroclus' side his warriors armed
Strode on, till surging on the foe they broke :
Then like to wayside wasps, in fury swarmed,
Wasps that in daily pastime boys provoke,
On the road's side, all for a childish joke,
Dealing annoy to a great multitude :
But should some passer-by with casual stroke
Stir them unwitting, in infuriate mood
They sally out each one, and fight for their own brood.

31

Hearted and souled like these, the Myrmidons
Streamed from the ships : the war-cry rose to the height.
And thus Patroclus thundered : " Phthia's sons,
Mates of Achilleus, Myrmidonians wight,
Be men, my friends, and mind you of your might,
That honour to Pelides we may bring,
For of the Achaians none like him to fight,
And Atreus' son may know, the wide-realmed king,
His folly, who with affront his bravest dared to sting."

32

So saying, with courage each one's heart he filled.
In mass they charged the Trojans : far and wide
Fierce rang the vessels, as their war-cry shrilled.
But when Menœtius' son the Trojans spied,
Him and his squire, bedight in glittering pride,
All quivered, and their ranks ebbed like a sea :
For Peleus' son, they deemed, had cast aside
His long revenge, and turned to amity :
And each looked glancing round, the steep of doom to flee.

33

And first Patroclus hurled his javelin stark
Full at the midst, where most men fought and bled,
By brave Protesilaus' leaguered bark,
And struck Pyræchmes, who the Pæons led
From Amydon, by Axius' oozy bed,
On the right shoulder : in the dust he lay,
Once having groaned : his mates in tumult fled,
For through their ranks Patroclus sent dismay,
Killing their valiant chief, who all surpassed in fray.

34

So from the fleet he chased them, and put out
The blazing fire : the ship was left half brent :
Back fled the Trojans with discordant shout,
And pouring through the ships the Danaans went,
And a great tumult rose, from all sides blent.
As when from off the top of mountain high
Clear-lightening Zeus a veil of clouds has rent,
And headlands all and points are shown thereby, [sky,
And glens, and from deep heaven bursts out the measureless

35

Thus, having driven the firebrand from their fleet,
Awhile the Danaans breathed : yet ceased not so
The combat : for not yet in foul defeat
Troy's ranks were scattered by their warlike foe,
But still made head, yielding constrained and slow :
Then chief slew chief in that wild press of fear,
And first Menœtius' valiant son did throw
At Areilycus' thigh his pointed spear
E'en as he turned, and drove right through the weapon sheer.

36

Its impact brake the bone, and in the dust
Prostrate he fell in helpless disarray.
But warlike Menelaus with sure thrust
Struck Thoas, as his breast unguarded lay
Beside his shield, and made the limbs give way.
Forth as Amphiclus rushed in furious raid
Meges was ware, and smote where thickest play
The muscles round the calf: the lance's blade
Each tendon rent: the eyes were dimmed with deadly shade.

37

But Nestor's sons—Antilochus did strike
Atymnius' flank; the javelin onward bore,
And down he crashed: Maris with shortened pike
Assailed the slayer, wroth for his brother's gore,
Guarding the corpse: but Thrasymed, before
The blow had lighted, smote with javelin keen
His shoulder; the fell blade the muscles tore
From the elbow-joint, and through the bone cut clean:
He fell: his eyes grew dim, and clanged his armour sheen.

38

So by two brothers hurried to the dead
Perished these twain, Sarpedon's comrades true,
The spear-famed children of a sire who bred
Chimæra fell, for many men to rue.
Aias the less on Cleobulus flew,
And caught him, hampered in the press of fight,
And loosed his strength, cutting his neck in two.
The steel was warmed with bloodshed: on his sight
Fate and empurpled death laid hands of tyrannous might.

39

Together Lycon and Peneleos ran ;
 For each at each had hurled a spear in vain :
 So now with swords the combat they began.
 Then Lycon smote the horse-hair crest amain,
 When the false glaive snapped at the hilt in twain :
 But fierce Peneleos round his falchion swung,
 Cut through the neck, and rent each spouting vein :
 Deep plunged the falchion : by the skin it hung,
 The severed head : to earth sank the lax limbs unstrung.

40

Then Mériones o'ertook by speed of limb
 Stout Acamas, e'en as his car he clomb,
 Pierced his right shoulder, and his eyes made dim.
 Through Erymas' mouth Idomeneus drave home
 His javelin : from below the point did come,
 Piercing the brain, and through the white bones tore :
 Out fell his teeth : he gasped forth bloody foam
 Through mouth and nose : his eyes were filled with gore :
 And the black cloud of death, descending, wrapped him o'er.

41

So each his man the Danaan leaders slay ;
 And as a pack of wolves on lambkins flies
 Or kids, and bears them raveningly away
 From their scared mothers, whom a swain unwise
 Lets straggle o'er the hills : they mark their prize,
 And rend the weak heart 'neath the tender skin :
 So on Troy's children rushed their enemies
 With murderous onset : flight's discordant din
 Comes surging on their souls : their strength grows faint and
 thin.

42

But still great Aias brass-helmed Hector eyed
With lifted dart: he, skilled in battle's lore,
Screening his shoulders with the tough bull-hide,
Marked the shafts hurtle and the javelins roar.
Full well he knew war's tide had turned once more,
Yet still stood firm, and saved his friends from harm.
E'en from Olympus as the clouds upsoar
To the high heaven, when Zeus spreads out the storm,
So, shouting, flying amain from forth the ships they swarm.

43

Not seemly their return: his horses fleet
Bore Hector armed away, the while his rear
Stood, checked by the broad fosse, that barred retreat.
There many a hampered courser, snapping sheer
The car-pole, left its helpless charioteer;
Loud screamed Patroclus to the Danaan folk,
Thirsting to slay Troy's sons: they, wild with fear,
Choked every outlet, once dispersed and broke;
And, melting 'mid the clouds, the dust-storm rose like smoke.

44

Back to the city, pantingly and quick,
From hut and ship the horses plied their heel;
And still Patroclus, where the press was thick,
Bore shouting on, while many 'neath his wheel
Fall headlong, and their toppling chariots peal.
The steeds, high bounding, cleared the trenchment wide,
Gift of the gods to Peleus, and with zeal
Yearned onward: still his heart on Hector cried:
But Hector whirls afar, fast as his barbs can stride.

45

As when the earth is heaving with a storm
Some day in autumn, when most violent rain
Zeus pours, what time his wrath with men is warm,
Who in the court the rule of justice strain,
And drive out right, and heaven's regard disdain ;
The rivers swell redundant as they flow,
And mountain-slopes wash crumbling to the plain,
As groaning deep to the dark ocean go
The torrents, and men's works are minished and brought low ;

46

Such dismal groaning Troy's fleet horses made
As on they hurried ; but Menœtius' son,
When the first ranks had fallen before his blade,
Back to the ships the remnant drove each one,
Perforce, nor let them to their city run,
But between river and fleet and wall did slay
His hunted foes, and much requital won.
First smote he Pronous' bosom, as it lay
Unguarded by his shield, and made his limbs give way :

47

Next upon Thestor, Enops' son, he rushed,
Who in his car sat crouching, smit with fright,
His reins dropped down : the javelin's point he pushed
Through the right jaw, and passed the teeth outright ;
So hoised him from the chariot, as a wight
Who sits to fish upon some rocky cape
A large fish lifts with line and iron bright ;
So with the spear he hoised him, all agape,
Then dropped him on his face, and life made swift escape.

48

Then Eryalus, rushing on amain,
He smote with a great stone full on the head
In the crown's centre, crashing all in twain
The skull in the helmet : so he tumbled dead,
And soul-bereaving gloom was o'er him shed :
Amphoterus then and Damastorides,
Pyris, and Echius, and Epaltes bled
With Polymelus and Euippus : these
On the boon earth he heaped, and loosed their stalwart knees.

49

But when his beltless friends Sarpedon spied
Slain by Patroclus' hand, Menœtius' son,
With loud reproach to Lycia's ranks he cried :
"Shame, shame, ye Lycians ! whither would ye run ?
Stand, and be men : I mean not, I, to shun
This chief, but meet his face, that I may see
Who conquers thus : much evil has he done
To Ilion, loosing many a valiant knee."
And from his chariot armed he leapt upon the lea.

50

Down leapt Patroclus likewise, when he saw :
And as two vultures screamingly engage
On a high rock with beak and taloned claw,
So rushed they each on each with shouts of rage.
Pitying beheld the son of Kronos sage,
And to his sister-consort told his mind :
"Ah sorrow, that this hour the Fates presage
That my Sarpedon, dearest of mankind,
From fell Patroclus' hand the stroke of death shall find !

51

“Two ways my heart inclines me as I brood,
Or should I place him safe in Lycian land,
Snatched living from the strife of tears and blood,
Or let him fall beneath Patroclus’ hand.”
Her consort’s face the large-eyed Hera scanned,
And “Awful king,” she cried, “what words are these?
What! a mere mortal, doomed long since and banned,
Wouldst thou make free from fate’s severe decrees?
Do it: but us gods beside thy doing shall not please.

52

“But this I say, and cast it in thine heart:
Shouldst thou alive Sarpedon homeward send,
Beware lest other godhead for his part
To his own son like favour should intend:
So shouldst thou many a blessed one offend
Whose sons at Ilion’s wall the fight darraign.
But if thou lov’st him, and wouldst fain befriend,
Withdraw thy hand, and suffer him to be slain
Beneath Patroclus’ arm there on the bloody plain,

53

“But when life leaves him, and his lips are dumb,
Thither let Death and gentle Sleep be sped,
To bear him, till to Lycia’s land they come:
There shall his kinsfolk build above his bed
Pillar and tomb: such honour have the dead.”
She spoke: nor did the Father disobey;
Meanwhile to earth a bloody shower he shed,
Honouring his offspring, whom the foe should slay
In deep-soiled Ilion, far from his own land away.

54

But when the twain advancing nearer drew,
Mencetius' son to Thrasymelus brave,
The prince Sarpedon's squire and comrade true,
A deep spear-wound low in the belly gave,
And loosed his limbs ; Sarpedon, as he drave,
Missed his great foe ; yet held the spear its own,
And, striking Pedasus the horse, it clave
Through the right shoulder : panting, a deep groan
He heaved, and fell in dust, and forth his soul was flown.

55

Started the twain asunder, and the yoke
Creaked loudly, and the reins were disarrayed
And tangled all, since in the dust and smoke
Their hapless trace-fellow in death was laid.
Right swiftly did Automedon lend his aid,
Drew from his brawny thigh his falchion good,
And cut the trace-horse off, nor slack'd his blade :
And the twain righted, and in harness stood :
While the chiefs joined again in that fell strife of blood.

56

Once more Sarpedon hurled his spear and failed :
O'er the left shoulder of Patroclus went
The weapon's point, nor struck whom it assailed :
Next rushed Patroclus on with deadly hent,
Nor vainly from his hand the lance was sent,
But smote where round the heart the midriff grew.
He fell as oak or poplar falls uprent,
Or leafy pine, which men in the mountains hew
With axe of keenest edge, a mast for some ship's crew.

57

So lay he groaning, clutching the red plain,
Before the chariot where he wont to ride.
As lion oft some tawny bull has slain,
Mid trailing-footed herds a beast of pride,
And in that strong clutch groaning he has died,
So 'neath Patroclus Lycia's leader wight
Groaned as he lay, and to his comrade cried :
"Sweet Glaucus, manly warrior, now 'tis right
That thou be spearman good, and resolute to fight :

58

"Now do thou make war's sorrow thy delight,
If aught of buoyance in thy limbs remain :
Go round, and all our Lycian chiefs incite
To do fierce battle for Sarpedon slain ;
Then with bare steel thyself the fight maintain :
For I shall make thee blush and hang the head
For all thy days, should once the Achaian train
Despoil me here, in the ships' circle dead.
So hearten all the host, and firmly hold thy stead."

59

Thus as he spoke, death's shadow clasped him round,
Nostrils and eyes : with foot on breast the foe
Drew from his flesh the javelin : through that wound
The vitals followed : life in bloody flow
Forth issued with the spear that dealt the blow.
The Myrmidons the snorting coursers stayed,
That fain had fled, when by the car let go.
But heavy grief on Glaucus' spirit weighed,
Hearing his comrade's voice, yet lacking power to aid.

60

He caught his arm and pressed it : for the smart
Galled him, which Teucer, as he rushed amain,
At the high wall inflicted with his dart.
And Phœbus he addressed in suppliant strain :
“ King, hear me, whether in the Lycian plain
Or Troy thou art : for thou the whole earth o’er
Canst hear and hearken to a man in pain :
For a great wound is stinging me, and sore
My hand with anguish throbs, nor can I stanch the gore :

61

“ I cannot firmly grasp the lance, nor fight
Man against man : my shoulder aches to the bone :
Dead is Sarpedon, our most valiant wight,
Offspring of Zeus, who doth not help his own :
Now then, great monarch, be thy healing shown,
Allay my pains, and give me strength to cheer
Our Lycian leaders to the war each one,
And fight myself for that pale body dear.”
He said, and to his words Apollo bowed an ear.

62

Full soon the god allayed the anguish sad,
Stanchèd the black blood, and heart and courage gave :
And Glaucus knew the healing, and was glad.
First went he to the Lycians, and did crave
Each leader’s aid, their fallen chief to save.
Then ’mid the Trojans passed he with long stride,
Seeking Polydamas and Agenor brave :
To Hector and Æneas eke he hied,
Stood by, and in their ears with wingèd accents cried :

63

“Hector, no thought of thine allies hast thou,
Who for thy sake far from their home decay,
Unhelped of thee ; low lies Sarpedon’s brow,
His, who in hand and tongue was Lycia’s stay :
Now Ares makes his life Patroclus’ prey.
But O forefend the shame, companions dear,
Lest Phthia’s children reave his arms away,
And mock his corpse, in vengeance for each fere
Whom we at the swift ships have slaughtered by our spear !”

64

So he : and on the Trojans grief came down
Hopeless, intolerable, like whirlwind black ;
For a great bulwark was he to their town,
Though stranger born, and many at his back
Had come, and he their chiefest in attack.
Straight rushed they on the Danaans : of their band
Went Hector first, wroth for Sarpedon’s wrack :
While his men’s fury stout Patroclus fanned,
Stirring the Aiantes chief, though either’s heart was manned :

65

“Valiant Aiantes, let it please you now
To beat the foe off bravely as before,
Or bravelier yet : low lies his haughty brow
Who first in fury on our rampart bore,
Sarpedon : what if having shed his gore
We could maltreat his corpse, and tear away
The radiant arms he on his shoulders wore,
And whoso guards him with sharp iron slay ?”
He spoke : and of themselves to combat fain were they.

66

So when each army had its ranks made strong,
Troy, Lycia, Argos, Phthia, all around
The dead man clashed in multitudinous throng,
Shouting aloud: their weapons gave dread sound.
Zeus o'er the combat spread grim night profound,
That grim might be that struggle o'er his son:
And Troy the first drove Argos from her ground,
For a man fell, no vulgar Myrmidon,
Epeigeus the divine, high-souled Agacles' son.

67

He in Budeion ruled, of ancient fame,
Erewhile, but, chancing a near friend to smite,
To Peleus and to Thetis suppliant came,
Who to fair Ilion with Achilleus wight
Sent him companion, against Troy to fight.
Him, as he grasped the carcass, on the head
Smote Hector with a stone, dividing quite
The skull in the helmet: prone upon the dead
He fell, and o'er his limbs soul-wasting death was spread.

68

Grief thrilled Patroclus at his comrade's fate:
Through the front rank he issued, not less slow
A hawk that daws and starlings doth amate:
So straight didst thou, fair knight Patroclus, go
Full at the Trojan and the Lycian foe,
Wrathful in heart for thy companion slain.
On Sthenelaus' neck he dealt a blow
With a huge stone, and rent the nerves in twain:
And Hector and his van in turn gave ground again.

69

Far as the measure of a javelin-throw
Which a man casts in war or sportive game,
Back stepped Troy's ranks, retiring from the foe.
First Glaucus, leader of the Lycian name,
Faced round, and slew Bathycles with sure aim,
Old Chalcon's heir, who dwelt in Hellas, blest
O'er Phthia's sons in riches and fair fame :
Him Glaucus with his spear full on the breast
Smote, turning sudden round, as on his heels he pressed.

70

Sounding he fell : the Argives grieved thereat
To see their warrior fall : Troy's sons were glad,
And thronged all round him : nor their foes forgot
Their martial spring, but charged them battle-mad.
Then Méridones a chief in iron clad
Laid in the dust, Onetor's son renowned
(Zeus' priest was he, and godlike honours had) :
'Neath jaw and ear he smote him : through the wound
Forth flitted the faint soul, and darkness wrapped him round.

71

At Méridones his spear Æneas threw,
In hope to reach him moving 'neath the shield :
But the brave foe was wary and withdrew,
Down stooping : o'er his back the javelin steeled
Passing, took root in the ground : the spear-shaft reeled
And quivered, till its fury at last it spent.
So the fell dart he brandished in the field
Lodged, for in vain from that strong arm 'twas sent.
Wrath seized Æneas' soul, and thus he gave it vent :

72

"Good Méridones, with all thy skill in dance,
My spear for aye had stopped thee, had it sped."
Answered the warrior, famous with the lance :
"Æneas, scarce mightst thou, though soldier bred,
Have power to send all mortals to the dead
Who in the fight against thine arm should stand :
Thou too art human : should my keen spear-head
Once reach thee, soon, despite thy strength of hand,
Fame thou shouldst give to me, thy soul to the dark land."

73

He ended : but Menetius' valiant son
Rebuked him thus with loud upbraiding call :
"A warrior thou, and teach thy tongue to run !
O friend ! the Trojans not for words of gall
Will part from that dead corpse, till some one fall.
War finds its issue but from hands that smite,
Words have their issue in the council-hall.
Not then to talk behoves us, but to fight."
He said, and led the way : he followed, godlike wight.

74

As in a mountain glen a sound upgrows
Of axes vigorously by woodmen plied,
And the report spreads far ; e'en thus there rose
A mingled din up from the champaign wide
Of brazen plate and well-wrought bullock-hide,
Dinted by falchion's thrust and javelin's bore.
Sure none had known Sarpedon, though keen-eyed,
Seeing him where he lay, all covered o'er
From foot to topmost crown with darts, and dust, and gore.

75

They round the corpse kept thronging, thick as flies
In spring-tide, when the pails with milk are dewed,
Swarm in the milking-shed: nor Zeus his eyes
Turned once away, but still the combat viewed,
While o'er Patroclus' death he much did brood,
Or should stout Hector in the vehement fray
Over Sarpedon's corpse shed out his blood
That instant, and his harness tear away,
Or yet for other eyes should he make dark the day.

76

Thus as he mused, at length it seemed him best
That the good squire of Peleus' valiant son
Should beat back Hector of the glancing crest,
Him and his men, and make them townward run,
And down to Hades send yet many a one.
In Hector first he stirred up zeal to fly,
Who climbed his car, and did the conflict shun,
And called his mates to follow: for on high
Zeus' sacred scales he knew, suspended in the sky.

77

Not e'en the Lycians did the shock sustain,
But fled each one, soon as their king they spied
Struck dead and lying among a ring of slain,
For many a man had fallen at his side,
When Kronos' son had strained the cord he tied.
Then from Sarpedon's breast his arms they tare,
Made all of brass, resplendent in their pride,
Which brave Patroclus shipward bade them bear.
And Zeus to Phœbus then did thus his mind declare:

78

“ Go now, dear Phœbus, cleanse from the black blood
The body of Sarpedon, mine own seed,
And bear from fight, and lave in river-flood,
Anoint, and clothe him with immortal weed :
So give him to those ministers of speed,
The twin-born Sleep and Death, who with quick tread
May take and lay him down in Lycian mead,
Where friend and kinsman may adorn his bed
With pillar and fair tomb : such honour have the dead.”

79

He spoke : obedient to the Sire revered,
From Ida's summit earthward to the fray
Glided Apollo down : at once he reared
Sarpedon's corpse from out the javelins' play,
And bore far off, and washed with river spray,
Dewed with heaven's oil, and robed in deathless weed :
And gave him to those swift ones to convey,
The twin-born Sleep and Death ; and they with speed
Took him and laid to rest in Lycia's pleasant mead.

80

And still Patroclus on their hindmost ran,
Trojan and Lycian : still his charioteer
And steeds he heartened : lost, insensate man !
Had he to Peleus' son lent duteous ear,
So had he saved him from the death-fate drear.
But stronger far is Zeus than mortal wight,
Who on the valiant spirit can send fear,
And baffle e'en the hands he nerved for fight ;
So now in that doomed breast he breathed delusive might.

81

Whom first, whom last, Patroclus, didst thou slay,
When the gods called thee deathward? Perimus,
Adrastus, and Autonous fell that day,
Epistor, Melanippus, Echeclus,
Pylartes then, Mulius, and Elasmus :
These slew he : and the rest all fled unmanned.
Then had the Achaians ta'en proud Ilion thus,
So fierce the spear raved in Patroclus' hand,
But on the well-built tower Apollo took his stand.

82

Aid to the Trojans, to Patroclus wrack
He brought. Upon the bastion thrice the foe
Leapt fiercely : thrice Apollo beat him back,
Striking the bright shield with resistless blow.
When the fourth time he rushed, a god in show,
With terrible voice outspoke the Deity :
" Give place, Patroclus, and thy measure know :
The capture of broad Troy is not for thee,
No, nor for Peleus' son, though far thy better he."

83

He spoke : Patroclus many a step recedes,
Nor seeks the angry godhead's power to dare.
But Hector at the Scæan gate his steeds
Held, much in doubt, should he to battle fare
Once more, or homeward bid the host repair :
When in man's form stood Phœbus at his side,
Like Asius, his own uncle, Dymas' heir,
Who dwelt in Phrygia, by Sangarian tide :
Like whom in form and face Phœbus Apollo cried :

84

"Hector, why cease from battle? 'tis not meet.
Were I thy better as I am thy worse,
Thou with a mischief shouldst from war retreat.
Come, on Patroclus drive each strong-hoofed horse,
If thou mayst slay him, and Phœbus give thee force."
Then back into the fight the godhead sped,
While Hector held with Kebriones discourse,
Bidding him drive to battle: Phœbus spread
Turmoil through Argos' ranks, and lifted Hector's head.

85

But Hector passed by all beside, and kept
Full on Patroclus his strong steeds outright.
Mencetius' son down from his chariot leapt,
A spear in the left hand wielding, while the right
Closed on a stone, rugged and glistening white.
Straining he threw it; nor 'twas hurled in vain,
Nor erred far off, but on the brow did smite
Brave Kebriones, of Priam's spurious strain,
Who Hector's chariot drove, e'en as he held the rein.

86

Crushed were the brows together: from the head
Out dropped the eyes: like diver of the seas
He from the car's seat tumbled and fell dead:
And the foe, gibing, spoke in words like these:
"Gods, 'tis a dexterous tumbler! with what ease
He topples! many a soul he sure might feed,
Diving for oysters, though in a stiff breeze:
So dexterously he tumbles on the mead:
Troy has its tumblers too; good sooth, a skilful breed!"

87

Thus having said, on Kebriones he pressed
As with a lion's force, that, spreading bane
Through fold and stall, is wounded deep in the breast,
And dies of his bold heart : so he, full fain,
At Kebriones sprang forward : on the plain
Hector no less from off his car did light.
So fought they o'er the dead, like lions twain,
Who for a slain stag on a mountain's height,
Each by his hunger driven, with quenchless fury fight.

88

So for dead Kebriones two lords of war,
Menœtius' son and Hector, nothing slow,
Strove with the steel each other's flesh to mar.
Stout Hector seized the head, nor left he go,
While of the feet laid hold his valiant foe :
And round them the two hosts made combat stark.
As east and west in fierce collision blow
In hill-side glen to uproot a forest dark,
Tall oak and stately ash and cornel long of bark :—

89

The trees together their long branches dash
With a great shock, that stuns far off the ear :—
So Trojan and Achaian meet and clash
In fierce assault, but neither dreamed of fear.
Round Kebriones took root full many a spear,
Many a winged arrow from the tense string shot ;
And many a stone smote on men's warlike gear,
There as they strove : he in a whirlwind hot
Huge in his hugeness lay, his horseman skill forgot.

90

Long as the sun was scaling heaven's high crest,
The darts took hold on both: they fell, they slew:
But when the sun 'gan slope toward the west,
The Achaians vantage got beyond their due:
Out from the darts brave Kebriones they drew
Despite the Trojans, and his harness pilled.
Infuriate on Troy's ranks Patroclus flew;
Thrice he rushed on, with Ares' spirit filled,
Shouting a terrible shout, and thrice nine men he killed.

91

When the fourth time he charged, a god in show,
Then fell death's shadow on Patroclus wight:
For Phœbus met him there, tremendous foe,
Walking in anger through the ranks of fight:
He knew not that dread presence: hid from sight
It moved, in covering mist enveloped dim:
Standing behind, his shoulders it did smite
With its flat hand, and made his eyes to swim,
And from his brow struck off the helm that frowned so grim.

92

Down with a clang among the horses' feet
Fell the high helmet, and the plume had stain
Of gore and dust: till now it was not meet
That crested cone should roll upon the plain:
But to Achilles' brow the sweeping mane
Lent beauty, and the brass did death repel:
And now to Hector, who should soon be slain,
Zeus gave it for his own:—all shivered fell
The spear, grim, heavy, and strong, with steel y-pointed well.

93

Bursting its strap, from off his back the shield
Dropped down : his corslet Phœbus' hand derayed :
Confusion seized his sense : his faint knees reeled :
Quaking he stood : when with adventurous blade
To pierce his back a Dardan chief essayed,
Panthoïdes Euphorbus :—none more wight
In spearcraft, speed of foot, or horseman trade :
Full twenty chiefs he made the ground to bite,
First venturing with his car, a novice in the fight :—

94

He at Patroclus hurled his javelin first,
Nor slew him, but drew back, and joined the crowd,
Snatching the weapon forth : nor yet he durst
Meet whom he wounded, though disarmed and cowed.
Back to his friends, by stroke and spear-wound bowed,
Retired Patroclus, for his life in fear.
But soon as Hector saw that champion proud
Retiring, sorely wounded, he came near,
Threading the ranks of war, and with protended spear

95

Pierced deep his flank, and drove the steel outright :
He fell, and stung the Achaian host with pain.
As lion tames a sturdy boar in fight,
When on a mountain's top have striven the twain
For a scant stream, whence each to drink is fain,
And so at last subdues his panting prey ;
So when Menœtius' son whole ranks had slain,
Hector advancing took his life away,
And, standing o'er him fallen, thus vauntingly did say :

96

“Patroclus ! ’twas thy boast thou wouldst destroy
My city, and sweep off to slavery sheer
On shipboard to thy land the dames of Troy :
Fool ! knowing not that Hector’s steeds are near
With their fleet hoofs : their master with the spear
Each warrior doth excel, and from each maid
Keeps thralldom far : but thou shalt moulder here.
Ill served thee thy brave friend, who haply laid
His charge on thee, when forth thou wentest, and he staid :

97

“ ‘ Now, good Patroclus, come not home again
To him thou leav’st at the smooth ships behind
Without the tunic of grim Hector slain.’
So haply spake he, swaying thy fond mind.”
And labouringly Patroclus thus rejoined :
“ Ay, Hector, boast : Zeus gives thee victory now,
And Leto’s son, who made me weak and blind,
And stripped my arms. Had twenty such as thou
Come near me in fair field, my lance had made them bow.

98

“ But Fate and Phœbus slew me, and of men
Euphorbus : thou the third but kill’st the slain.
Yet one truth more I tell for thee to ken ;
Not long shalt thou in triumph tread the plain,
For death and fate are rushing on amain,
And great Achilleus’ hand shall deal thee doom.”
So closed his lips, that opened ne’er again :
And from the limbs the soul fled forth to gloom,
Lamenting its own lot, leaving its strength and bloom.

99

And Hector spoke, albeit to a deaf ear:
“ Why bode me death, Patroclus? who can say
That first Achilles shall not taste my spear?”
And with his foot set on him as he lay
Wrenched out the dart, and thrust the corpse away.
Then on Automedon he turned the war,
Achilleus’ godlike squire, intent to slay:
But the fleet steeds that drew Pelides’ car,
Immortal, Heaven’s own gift, whirled him from danger far.

BOOK XVII.

1

NOR had not Menelaus heard the tale
Of brave Patroclus by his foes o'erthrown :
Through the front ranks he strode, in complete mail,
And as a heifer watches o'er her own,
The first-fruit of her pangs, and makes sad moan
Unceasing, round his comrade's bleeding clay
So marched Atrides : his broad buckler shone
Before him, and his spear did glance and play,
Eager to strike him dead, whoe'er should cross his way.

2

Nor yet did bold Euphorbus spare to take
Heed of Patroclus fallen : straightway he
Stood by his side, and to Atrides spake :
"Valiant Atrides, prince of high degree,
Leave now the dead and let his plunder be :
For never Trojan nor ally of Troy
Wounded in fight Patroclus before me :
So let me fame among my peers enjoy,
Lest I should gall thee sore, and thy dear life destroy."

3

And Menelaus in hot wrath replied :
" O heaven ! not seemly 'tis so high to boast.
Sure neither pard nor lion in their pride,
Nor terrible wild boar, himself a host,
Whose heart is stoutest and his strength the most,
Can match with Panthous' sons for high disdain.
Yet valiant Hyperenor to his cost
Defied me : of his youth he reaped small gain,
When he provoked my arm, and gave his tongue the rein.

4

" Of all the Danaans basest and most mean
That hero called me, and to fight defied :
Yet on his feet went he not back, I ween,
To cheer his parents and his darling bride.
So shalt thou too lie prostrate, wilt thou bide
My conquering arm, which yet I bid thee shun
And lose thee 'mid the mass, lest ill betide.
E'en fools are sages, when the deed is done."
So he : and all unmoved thus answered Panthous' son :

5

" Now shall thy life, Atrides, quit this hour
His whom thou boastest that thine arm laid low,
Widowing a consort in her new-trimmed bower,
And working sire and mother endless woe.
Could I to Panthous and fair Phrontis show
That head, that harness, quickly should I dry
The piteous tears from their sad eyes that flow.
Not long shall battle's chance remain to try ;
No ; be the riddle read, who best can fight or fly."

6

He spake, and at the shield's broad surface drave,
Yet pierced he not the brass: the point was bent
In the strong buckler. Next the Spartan brave
Made onset with his javelin, having sent
A prayer to Zeus, to prosper his intent.
E'en as the foe drew back, he fixed a wound
In the throat's root, and to the weapon leant
Fell impact: through the neck a path it found:
He with a clang of arms fell heavily to the ground.

7

Blood drenched that hair which might with Graces' vie,
Those locks, entwined with gold and silver rings.
As gardener rears an olive tenderly
In a lone spot, wherein much water springs,
Low bends it to the amorous visitings
Of each fond breeze, and white bloom tips its spray:
Sudden a blast sweeps down on whirlwind wings,
From the root tears it, and on earth doth lay:
So fell the youth, and fain the foe had spoiled his prey.

8

As mountain lion, confident in might,
Tears from a grazing herd the choicest steer,
First crunches its frail neck with deadly bite,
Then laps the gore and entrails, glad of cheer:
Herdmen and dogs the while, afar, not near,
About him and about him yell and cry,
But counter him dares none, so strong their fear:
Thus in the breasts of these no heart so high
Was beating, Atreus' son to combat to defy.

9

Then had Atrides stripped the warlike gear
Off Panthous' son, but Phoebus grudged the deed,
And on his track set Hector, Ares' peer ;
Of Mentès, him who did the Cicons lead,
He took the form, and cried with words of speed :
" So, Hector, there thou runnest, with wild aim
To take Pelides' coursers for thy meed :
Yet hard were they for man to ride or tame,
Save for Achilleus' self, born of immortal dame :

10

" While Menelaus, Atreus' martial son,
Stalking around Patroclus' corse, hath slain
The youth Euphorbus, Ilion's bravest one,
And quenched his fiery soul " Then back again
He passed into the battle : keenest pain
Made Hector's bosom dark : swift gazing round
He swept the ranks, and marked Atrides fain
To plunder the bright arms, while on the ground
Lay the slain youth, and blood welled from his gaping wound.

11

So, shouting 'mid the van, accoutred whole
He went, like fire's unvanquishable might :
Atrides knew, and talked with his brave soul :
" Ah me ! if here I leave the harness bright
And the dear friend who died to do me right,
Some Danaan will be wroth to see this thing :
But should I stay and with the Trojans fight
And Hector, all around me a vast ring
Will gather : for to field he his whole host doth bring.

12

“ But wherefore doth my heart arede me so ?
Who beards a champion that the gods inspire,
Swift on his head is rolled a mighty woe :
Nor will men blame me should I now retire
From Hector : for 'tis Zeus hath stirred his fire.
Yet let me hear of Aias, and we twain
Will mind ourselves once more of conflict dire
E'en 'gainst a god, so may we hale the slain
Home for Achilleus' sake : that were the lesser bane.”

13

While with himself he inly held discourse,
On came the Trojan host in fierce attack,
Hector their leader : from the dead perforce
He turned him and retired, oft glaring back :
As a well-bearded lion, whom a pack
Of howling dogs and men from herd stall fray
With weapons and loud din : his blood runs slack
Within him, and perforce he turns away :
Thus did Atrides leave Patroclus' gory clay :

14

His mates rejoined, he stood and gazed about,
Seeking great Aias, Telamonian bred :
Him marked he on the left of all that rout,
Exhorting to the fight the troops he led,
For a great fear on all had Phœbus shed :
Running he went, stood by him, and did say :
“ Hither, sweet Aias ! to Patroclus dead
Haste we, his naked corse, if so we may,
To save for Peleus' son : his arms are Hector's prey.”

15

He spoke, and Aias' heart within him boiled.
Through the front ranks together strode that pair,
While Hector dragged the corse himself had spoiled,
Fain with sharp steel the head and trunk to share
And toss the carrion to Troy's dogs to tear.
With tower-like shield came Aias storming down :
Then backward to his friends did Hector fare
And climbed his car : the armour to the town
By others' hands he sent, to win him high renown.

16

But Aias o'er the dead his shield displayed,
Striding as lion round his young doth stride
Met sudden by the hunters in the shade
Leading his whelps : he glares from side to side,
And wrinkles down his brow, his eyes to hide.
So round the dead did Aias circuit make.
On the other hand Atrides, battle's pride,
Stood, grieving sore, e'en as his heart would break.
And thus Hippolochus' son to Hector sternly spake :

17

"Comeliest in form, in war thou much dost lack.
False is the fame ye craven souls enjoy.
Bethink thee how to save thy town from sack,
With none to help thee but the sons of Troy :
For of the Lycians none shall spear employ
About yon towers : for battle's ceaseless trade
Wins us no thanks, but rather worse annoy.
How should a meaner wight expect thine aid,
Seeing Sarpedon's self by thy base flight betrayed ?

18

"Him didst thou leave, thy friend, thy comrade brave,
Who wrought much profit to thy town and thee
Living—whom yet from dogs thou wouldst not save.
Now, if the Lycians will give heed to me,
Home will they go, and Troy her fate shall dree.
Ah! could the Trojans feel in every vein
Such force as comes on warriors, who, to free
Their country, to their foes give trouble and pain,
Soon should we into Troy drag home Patroclus slain!

19

"Had we that dead man once within the gate
Of Priam's city, haled from out the fray,
Sarpedon's arms they would restore us straight,
And his dear corse to Troy we should convey:
For great is he whose squire was slain to-day,
Best of their host, and such his followers are.
But thou for Aias' onset daredst not stay
Nor foot to foot confront him in the war,
Nor meet his dreadful eye, who is thy better far."

20

Whom with a frown brave Hector thus addressed:
"Glaucus, it suits thee not, thy misproud strain.
Friend, I esteemed thee once in wisdom best
Of Lycia's sons: but 'twas a feeble brain
Told thee I dared not Aias' arm sustain.
I quail not, I, at fight or horsehoof's beat:
But matched with Zeus all human wit is vain:
The valiant he dismays, and gives defeat
For victory, and makes dull the veins he thrilled with heat.

21

“Come now, good friend, stand by me, and behold
If I in truth be craven all the day,
Or teach some Danaan chief, though ne’er so bold,
To cease contending for Patroclus’ clay.”
So saying, he shouted to the mailed array :
“Troy, Lycia, Dardany, close-fighters true !
Be men, my friends, and nerve you for the fray,
While I meantime Achilleus’ arms endue,
Which from that corse I tore, Patroclus, whom I slew.”

22

This spoken, Hector parted from the fight,
And running, soon o’ertook his mates, whose care
Was carrying home Achilleus’ armour bright.
Standing apart, he changed his harness there :
His own he left for those brave men to bear
Troyward : himself the arms of his great foe
Donned, which the gods once gave for Peleus’ wear,
And he in turn did on his son bestow,
Aging : but not to age that son therein did grow.

23

Him when cloud-gathering Zeus at distance spied
Donning the great Pelides’ martial gear,
He shook his head, and to his own heart cried :
“Unhappy ! thou within thee hast no fear
From thought of death, which yet approaches near
Of a great chief before whom others quail
Thou donn’st the arms : thou slewest with thy spear
His valiant friend, and from the body pale
Didst rend in wrongful sort the helm and glittering mail.

24

"Now victory thou shalt have, amends to make,
For ne'er at thy return from hand of thine
Andromache shall that bright harness take."
This said, the King did his dark brows incline.
The arms sat close, and Ares the divine
Passed into him : through every member streamed
Valour and force : loud shouting down the line
He sought his federates, while to all he seemed
Like to Pelides' self, so bright his armour beamed.

25

Passing along their ranks, on each he cried,
On Mesthles, Medon, and Thersilochus,
Astropæus, Glaucus true and tried,
Deisenor, Phorkys, Chromius, Ennomus,
And brave Hippothous, and bespoke them thus :
"Hear me, ye federate myriads, neighbours all !
Not for parade of numbers without use
Each from his several city did I call,
But that our wives and babes ye might defend from thrall.

26

"This to procure, for food and presents large
I grind the people down beneath my sway,
Feasting each federate at the city's charge.
Now set each face like flint towards the fray
For death or life : such terms doth war obey.
But whoso Troyward shall Patroclus bear,
Though lifeless, and from Aias wrest the day,
Those spoils with him together I will share,
And honour shall be his, e'en as mine own, to wear."

27

So spake he: at the foe they rushed amain
With lifted lances: and their hope was high
From Aias' stalwart hands to drag the slain:
Fools! on that corse were many yet to die.
And Aias then did to Atrides cry:
"Sweet Menelaus, Zeus-bred warrior great!
No more I hope to put this peril by:
Nor fear I so about Patroclus' fate,
Doomed as he is full soon Troy's hounds and birds to sate,

28

"As for my head I fear, lest aught betide,
And thine: for war's black cloud o'er all is poured,
E'en Hector: and for us the grave yawns wide.
Come, call for rescue on each Danaan lord."
And Atreus' son outcried with swift accord:
"Friends, chiefs, and rulers of our Argive band,
Who, placed in honour at the Atridan board,
Drink wine at public cost, and give command
Each to his host, while praise and power beside you stand,

29

"Hard were it, while so fiercely battle's flame
Is kindled round us, each one's face to read.
Come forth yourselves, and count it deadly shame
To leave Patroclus to the wild dogs' greed."
He said: and first Oïleus' son made speed,
Threading the lines of war, to do his hest.
Idomeneus and Mériones succeed
Like man-destroying Ares: of the rest
What tongue could mention all, as in the rear they pressed?

30

On plunged the Trojans : Hector led their bands.
As at the outfall of a heaven-dropt stream
Wave bellows against current, and the strands,
As the chafed sea disgorges, yell and scream,
Such and no less their war-cry mightst thou deem
As on they charged : the Achaians round the dead
Stood, fenced by their close bucklers : Zeus supreme
Made dim the radiant helmet on each head,
Pouring a dense dark mist, that all around them spread.

31

For Zeus aforetime stood Patroclus' friend,
While yet he lived and was Achilleus' squire,
And now he grudged him to Troy's dogs to rend :
So in his comrades he did zeal inspire
To save him. First the Trojans made retire
Their foe, who left the dead, and backward reeled ;
Yet not a man they slew, though all on fire ;
Only they dragged the body. Aias wheeled
His rallying comrades round, not fated long to yield,

32

Aias, in prowess and in form before
His Danaan peers, save great Æacides :
Through the front ranks he broke, like a wild boar,
Who on a mountain men and dogs with ease
Scares, as he turns to bay among the trees ;
So the stout son of Telamon that day
Scattered in rout the Trojan phalanxes
That stalked around Patroclus, eager they
To drag him to their town and bear much fame away.

33

The corpse Hippothous, Lethus' son renowned,
Was dragging by the foot with might and main,
A bullhide thong about the ankles bound,
For Hector's sake and Troy's: but quickly bane
Caught him, nor could men ward it, although fain,
For Aias, rushing on in fell career,
Through the brass helmet pierced him to the brain:
With the lance-point the casque was severed sheer,
Struck by that stalwart hand and that tremendous spear.

34

The brain, all gory, from the gaping wound
Sprang round the spear-shaft, and his strength was sped.
Patroclus' foot his hands upon the ground
Dropped, and he fell, a dead man on the dead,
Far from his home: who bore him and who bred
Found no requital: for his days were few,
Thus by the spear of Aias minished.
Then Hector his bright lance at Aias threw;
But Aias marked it coming, and from death withdrew.

35

So Schedius caught it, Iphitus' brave son,
Who dwelt in Panopeus, of Phocians wight
The prime and glory, ruling many a one:
'Neath collar-bone infixed, the javelin bright
Passed on, and through the shoulder pierced outright:
He fell, and falling made his arms to clank.
But Aias Phorkys, Phænops' son, did smite,
Guarding Hippothous: in the belly sank
The javelin, rent the corslet, and the entrails drank.

36

He in the dust lay clutching the red plain :
The foremost ranks and Hector shrank in fear.
The Argives, yelling, dragged Hippothous slain
And Phorkys, and unloosed their warlike gear.
Then had their own faint hearts and Argos' spear
Enforced the Trojans to their town to flee,
And Argos had won fame by prowess sheer,
Though Zeus forbade : but Phœbus, even he,
Spoke in Æneas' ear, like Periphas to see ;—

37

Anchises' herald was that ancient man,
Who grey by his grey master's side had grown :—
In form like him, Apollo thus began :
“ Æneas, how should Ilion hold her own
E'en 'gainst the gods, as others I have known
In their own strength for their own city stand,
Albeit in numbers weaker than their fone ?
Liefer would Zeus give victory to our hand
Than theirs: but ye, poor hearts, are shrinking all unmanned.”

38

He said : the godhead's face Æneas knew,
Fronting his own, and thus to Hector cried :
“ Hector, and ye that lead our martial crew,
Shame were it to be swept by battle's tide
Back to our walls, nor dare the foe to bide.
Still doth protecting Zeus our cause maintain,
So some god tells me, standing by my side :
Charge on their ranks, nor let them without pain
Back to the Danaan ships drag off Patroclus slain.”

39

So saying, he stood in front of all the van :
They turned them round, and faced the Achaians straight.
Then did Æneas pierce a valiant man,
Leiocritus, good Lycomedes' mate :
Good Lycomedes, pitying his sad fate,
Came near, and launched a javelin on the breeze,
And Apisaon smote, a ruler great,
Deep in the liver, and relaxed his knees,
Who for the war had left Pæonia's fruitful leas.

40

Bravest of Pæons was that chief, save one,
Asteropæus, who, his comrade's end
Pitying, to mingle in the fight had run,
But could not : with their shields the Danaans penned
Patroclus round, and did their spears protend.
For Aias 'mong them strode, with many a hest,
And suffered none to swerve from their dead friend
Nor to the fight stand forth before the rest,
But bade them keep close rank, and combat breast to breast.

41

Such charge great Aias gave : ensanguined dyes
Made red the ground : in rows the corpses lay,
Corpses of Trojans and their bold allies
And Danaans : for not bloodless fought e'en they,
Though fewer souls they lost, remembering aye
Each in the press his fellow to bestead.
So like grim fire they fought : nor could man say
That sun and moon were safe above his head,
For darkness wrapped them round who stood about the dead.

42

The rest of Troy and Argos calm and free
Fought under a clear sky : the sun's keen light
Flooded them round, and cloud was none to see
On land or hill : taking their rest they fight,
Shunning on either hand the javelins' flight,
At distance ranged : but they in the midst had pain
Of mist and war : their bravest felt the bite
Of the sharp steel. Nor Nestor's children twain
Had yet the tidings heard of good Patroclus slain :

43

In the forefront they deemed him battling still :
So, watching to prevent their friends' defeat,
Apart they fought : for such was Nestor's will
When fieldward he despatched them from the fleet.
But on the rest all day was deathful heat
Of conflict : sweat and toil made moist the knees
And brawny calves, and trickled down the feet,
And dabbled were the eyes and hands of these
Fighting for the good squire of swift Æacides.

44

As when a master to his workmen's hand
Gives, drunken deep with fat, a bullock's skin,
They take it, and as round in ring they stand,
Pull, till the drops come out, the fat sinks in :
E'en so from side to side, scant space within,
They tugged at the dead body, friends and foes,
While hope was lively in each breast to win,
In these, to hale him to Troy wall, in those,
To drag him to the ships : and fierce the conflict rose.

45

Ares nor Pallas had that conflict blamed,
How hot soe'er their fury : such dire pain
Had Zeus that day for horse and horseman framed.
Nor yet Achilles knew Patroclus slain,
For distant from the ships the battle-plain
Beneath Troy-towers : he looked not for his fall,
But deemed that homeward he would turn again,
The gates once reached : for ne'er he hoped at all,
With or without his aid, his friend would storm the wall.

46

For so his mother in his ear alone
The counsel of great Zeus had oft aread :
Yet ne'er such terrible evil had she shown
As then befel, his dearest comrade dead.
They round the body pushed the keen spear-head,
Slaying and slain by turns in battle's heat :
And ever and anon some Argive said :
"O friends ! 'twere foul dishonour to retreat :
No—let the solid earth first open 'neath our feet.

47

"Far better so if our dear comrade slain
We from our hands for weakness now let slide,
That Troy may hale him home, and glory gain."
And oft and oft some gallant Trojan cried :
"Friends ! though 'twere doomed that all at this man's side
Should perish, yet let none his name bely."
So saying, his fellow's heart he fortified.
Thus strove they : and the iron din on high
Rose to the brazen heaven through the blank waste of sky.

48

But the Peleïan steeds, remote from fray,
Wept, when they knew that their loved charioteer
Tumbled in dust by murderous Hector lay.
Oft did Automedon, the offspring dear
Of old Diores, chide with lash severe
Their failing hearts, and oft did speech bestow
Of warlike menace or of gentle cheer:
But to the navy back they would not go
To Hellespontus' side, or forward to the foe :

49

But as a pillar on a funeral mound
Stands firm, some man's or woman's death to show,
So stood they, their heads drooping to the ground,
Fast by the chariot: from their eyes did flow
A river of warm tears for very woe
To lose their guide: escaping from the yoke
In the black dust their glossy manes lay low.
Thus as they grieved Kronion's pity woke,
And, shaking his dark brows, to his own heart he spoke :

50

"Why gave we you to Peleus, hapless pair,
Ageless and deathless you, while mortal he?
Was it that man's affliction ye might share?
For of all things that crawl the ground and see
Than wretched man none wretcheder can be.
Yet never drawn by you to field shall ride
Hector Priamides: my firm decree
Forefends that chance: suffice it for his pride
That with the immortal arms he thus is glorified.

51

“ Fresh vigour will I breathe into your frame,
To bear Automedon safe home from fight
To the smooth barks : but yet shall Troy have fame,
Still slaughtering onward to the ships outright,
Till the sun sinking usher in the night.”
So saying, he breathed into them strength to go.
Tossing the dust from off their manes so bright
They whirled the chariot after friend and foe ;
Whereon Automedon fought, though smitten with deep woe.

52

Like vulture chasing geese the chief appeared,
So lightly from the Trojan press he flew,
So swift, returning, through their ranks careered.
Yet, though he chased and scared them, none he slew :
Single, the work of twain he might not do,
Charge with the lance, and rein that fiery pair.
At length there marked him his companion true,
Alcimedon, Laercus’ valiant heir,
Who stood at the car’s back, and did his mind declare :

53

“ Automedon, what god on thee bestows
An evil mind, and takes away the good ?
Singly, thou brav’st the vanguard of our foes,
While thy dear friend low lieth in his blood,
And Hector glories in those arms endued.”
To whom in turn Diores’ son replied :
“ Alcimedon, what man than thou more shrewd
Of Argive men the immortal steeds to guide,
Save great Patroclus’ self, our noblest, ere he died ?

54

"Take now the bright reins and the sounding throng,
And I will quit the horses, and so fight."

He said : that other to the chariot sprung
And grasped the reins and lash with action light ;
Down leapt Automedon, marked of Hector wight,
Who to Æneas spoke, that stood not far :
" Æneas, chief among Troy's men of might,
I see the steeds that draw Pelides' car,
Driven by unskilful hands, advancing to the war.

55

" Good hope have I that we might seize the twain,
If such thy will : for not at our attack
Would their weak drivers dare the fight maintain."
So counselled he : nor was Æneas slack.
Straight on they marched, each with a bullhide black
Wrapping his shoulders, which strong brass o'erlay.
And Chromius and Aretus at their back
Went both of them : for high in hope were they
To kill the chariot's lords and drive the steeds away.

56

Fools ! for 'twas theirs not bloodless to retire
Back from Automedon. He to Zeus made prayer,
And, heartened with new strength, addressed his squire :
" Alcimedon, keep not far thy trusty pair,
But let my shoulders feel their breath's warm air :
For well I wot, Hector will ne'er refrain
Till he be mounted on thy chariot there,
Slaughtering us two, and drive the Argive train
Before him, or himself in the front rank be slain."

57

Then, calling loud, the Aiantes he addressed :
" Noble Aiantes, and thou Sparta's king,
Leave now the body to your valiantest
To check the foe and round it weave their ring ;
But from us living ward away death's sting.
For Hector and Æneas, bravest these
Of Trojans, on our heads the battle bring.
Howbeit the issue lies on the gods' knees.
Look, I will launch my spear : speed it as Zeus may please."

58

He said, and, poising first, his javelin cast,
And smote Aretus on his buckler's round ;
Not checked by that defence, onward it past
Till in the lowest belly its goal it found.
As one with a sharp axe a bull doth wound
Behind at the horns' root, and severs sheer
The muscles : it falls prostrate with a bound :
So bounding he fell backward : the strong spear
Unnerved him, in his flesh quivering with throbs severe.

59

His lance at brave Automedon Hector threw,
Who marked it on its way, nor scorned to yield,
But, stooping downward, did the death eschew.
Onward it passed and lodged within the field ;
Awhile the massy spear-shaft quivered and reeled,
Till Ares' fury ebbing left it tame.
And now they had pressed on their swords to wield,
But the Aiantes parted them, who came
Like lightning through the host, hearing their friend's acclaim.

60

Hector, Æneas, Chromius, all in fear
Shrank back, and left Aretus foully sped,
The while Automedon, swift Ares' peer,
The armour stripped, and words of boasting said :
" Now is my spirit for Patroclus dead
A little cheered, though meaner this man's blood."
So saying, within the car the harness red
He placed, and mounted, head and foot bedewed
With gore, like lion grim who has slain a bull for food.

61

Once more above Patroclus straight and even
The terrible battle stretched its iron line :
Athene stirred the fray, sent down from heaven
At instance of wide-gazing Zeus divine,
To rouse the Danaans : so did he incline.
As Zeus for mortals doth from heaven extend
His purple bow, of war to be a sign
Or token of chill storms, that bring to end
Man's labours upon earth, and cattle much offend,

62

So having wrapped her in a purple cloud
'Mid Argos' host she plunged, and roused each one :
Then, taking Phoenix' form and utterance loud,
She heartened Menelaus, Atreus' son
(For he was standing near), and thus begun :
" Now, Menelaus, scorn and shame shall fall
On thy bowed head, if that dear corpse be won,
And ravening dogs devour it 'neath Troy wall :—
But manfully hold on, and rouse the people all !"

63

And Menelaus, good at need, replied :
" Sweet, kind old Phœnix, would Athene lend
Strength to my arms, and turn those darts aside,
Right gladly would I champion and defend
Patroclus : for his death my heart did rend :
But Hector burns like fire, nor slacks his blade
In killing : for his fame doth Zeus intend."
He spoke : and joyful was the immortal maid
For that to her the first of all heaven's powers he prayed.

64

She gave him strength shoulders and knees within,
And with the courage of a fly endued,
Which, beaten oft away from a man's skin,
Keeps biting on, for love of the rich blood :
E'en thus his strength and courage she renewed.
About the dead he strode, and hurled his spear.
There was a Trojan, Podes, wealthy and good,
Eëtion's son, by Hector held most dear,
His boon companion still in feasting and good cheer.

65

Him Menelaus pierced, as forth he fled,
E'en at the belt, and drove the weapon through :
Clanging he fell : Atrides the pale dead
To his own ranks from out the Trojans drew :
While Phœbus, like to Asius' son to view,
Who in Abydos dwelt, as host and guest
More than all men beside to Hector true,
That valiant chief upbraidingly addressed :
" Hector, can fear of thee e'er dwell in Argive breast ?

66

"Thou shrink'st from Menelaus, who of old
Was a weak warrior : now he drags away
A dead man, e'en thine own companion bold,
Podes, Eëtion's son, whom he did slay."
Grief whelmed the hero's soul to hear his say :
Through the van strode he, sheathed in armour proud.
Then Zeus did on his tasselled Ægis lay
Firm hold, and wrapping Ida all in cloud,
Shook it with vibrant force, and, lightening, thundered loud.

67

Victory to Troy he sent, to Argos fear :
And Peneleos the first began the flight :
His shoulder, still protruded, caught a spear
Which grazed its edge and on the bone did write,
Sent by Polydamas, that warrior wight :
Then Hector wounded Leïtus at the wrist,
Alectryon's son, and made him cease from fight :
He trembled and glanced round, for well he wist
No more with lance in hand he might the foe resist.

68

Forth to pursue sprang Hector : Creta's chief
Smote him upon the plate that wrapped his breast :
The spear snapped short : Troy shouted, glad and lief :
He at the Cretan then his lance addressed
E'en as he clomb the car, nor gained his quest,
But Kœranus instead the javelin caught,
The squire, who went from Lyctus' city blest
To follow Mériones : so then he brought
Help to his lord's dear lord, as all on foot he fought.

69

Great fame Idomeneus had given to Troy,
As thus he fought, but Kœranus drew near
With the fleet car, and brought him light and joy,
Warding off death: himself beneath the spear
Of murderous Hector fell: 'twixt jaw and ear
The keen point passed, and forced the teeth from the head
With terrible impact, and the tongue cut sheer.
Toppling he fell: the reins on earth were spread:
Which Mériones picked up, and to his chieftain said:

70

"Quick to the swift-winged vessels! ply the scourge!
Thyself canst tell, Argos has lost her might."
He spoke: that other the fair steeds did urge
To the smooth ships: for sore was his affright.
Nor 'scaped it Aias nor Atrides wight
That Zeus on Ilion victory did bestow:
And Aias thus, the giant, spoke outright:
"Ah me! by this the veriest babe may know
That Zeus our strength bereaves, and gives it to the foe.

71

"He guides their weapons: each one plants a wound,
Whether from strong or weakling arm it flies,
While ours all drop successful to the ground.
But come, and let us with ourselves advise
The corpse to rescue and with glad surprise
Ourselves returning our dear comrades greet,
Who now are gazing hither with sad eyes,
Saying that Hector ne'er will slake his heat
Till his invincible hands fall heavy on the fleet.

72

“ And find we too some comrade, swift and bold,
To great Pelides with the news to send :
For yet, I ween, that chief hath not been told
This bitter woe, the death of his dear friend.
But where, alas ! may now such wight be kenned ?
For all are wrapped in gloom, our steeds and we.
Zeus, sire, do thou the veil of darkness rend,
And make clear daylight, that our eyes may see :
Then in the light e’en slay us, since it thus must be ! ”

73

He spoke ; and Zeus took pity on his tears,
Cleared off the gloom and rolled the mist away :
Forth shines the sun, and all the fight appears ;
And to Atrides then did Aias say :
“ Now look around, heaven-nurtured chief, I pray,
If Nestor’s son yet living may be kenned,
Antilochus ; and bid him swift convey
Tidings to Peleus’ son, his heart to rend,
That on the plain lies dead his best-belovèd friend.”

74

So he : nor Atreus’ son refused him then,
But went to go, like lion from a fold,
Tired with long warfare against dogs and men,
Who let him not of a fat bull take hold,
Watching all night : he, fierce and hungry-souled,
On rushes, but in vain ; for many a dart
Leaps in his face from arm of herdman bold,
And firebrand, which he dreads, though keen of heart ;
Then at the break of dawn he sullenly doth part.

75

So from Patroclus parting turned away
Atrides, ill content, for sore his dread
Lest the dear corse be left, its enemies' prey,
In that wild terror: many a word he said
To his brave friends, and many a charge ahead:
"Now, brave Aiantes and good Mériones,
Let each bethink him of Patroclus dead,
That gentle heart, who, living, all did please:
Now on his life dark fate and the grim death-god seize."

76

This said, he went, quick glancing on each side,
E'en as an eagle, which of birds of air,
Men say, no fellow hath so piercing-eyed,
From its high eyrie marks a timorous hare
Crouched 'neath a thick-leaved bush, then down doth bear,
And, trussing the weak prey, its life outdrain:
So, Menelaus, glancing everywhere
Thine eyes did dart through all that numerous train,
To see if Nestor's son unharmed did yet remain.

77

Him at the battle's left at once he saw,
Heartening his friends and making them more keen,
And with such words up to his side did draw:
"Hither, brave youth, and thine attention lean
To sorrowful tidings, which should ne'er have been.
E'en from thine own eyes' witness thou must know,
That on our ranks Heaven rolls o'erwhelming teen:
Victory is Troy's: our noblest heart lies low,
Patroclus, and for us is yearning and much woe."

78

"Thou to Achilleus with the tidings run,
That shipward he may rescue the pale dead
Naked: for those bright arms hath Hector won."
Antilochus heard, and shuddered all adread:
Awhile he stood, mute and astonished:
Tears filled his eyes, and choked his utterance clear:
But soon, obedient to that hest, he sped,
And to Laodocus gave his warlike gear,
His comrade in the field and trusty charioteer.

79

So went he weeping, borne on his swift feet,
To tell to Peleus' son the dire event.
Nor yet did Menelaus think it meet
To help that gallant band, o'ertoiled and spent,
From whom Antilochus on his errand went,
Leaving sore yearnings to the Pylian train,
But to their aid brave Thrasymede he sent:
Himself to dead Patroclus turned again,
And, running to their side, bespoke the Aiantes twain:

80

"Sent to the fleet ships is our messenger
To Peleus' son the tidings to convey:
Yet, fiercely though his wrath 'gainst Hector stir,
To fight, I ween, he will not forth to-day:
A man unarmed, how should he mix in fray?
Let us the while some wise expedient try
Homeward to drag Patroclus' unsouled clay,
'Scaping the terror of Troy's battle-cry."
And Telamonian Aias made thereto reply:

81

"All things hast thou said well, Atrides dear :
Thou then and Mériones stoop down and take
The dead upon your shoulders : in the rear
We twain 'gainst Troy and Hector fight will make,
We, namesakes and sworn comrades, wont to break
War's onset side by side from days of yore."
The dead from earth they lifted, as he spake,
High in the air : loud swelled the fierce uproar
Of Troy, as in her sight those chiefs the body bore.

82

On rushed they, as in front of the hunters run
Dogs on a wild boar wounded, eager they
To tear his flesh : yet scattering flies each one,
When confident in strength he turns to bay :
So pressed the Trojans on in close array,
Pricking the foe with sword and steel-tipped pike :
But when the Aiantes, turning, faced the fray,
Then their cheeks whitened, nor was one did like,
Adventuring in the front, stroke of offence to strike.

83

So these from out the fight the body bore :
War bellowed at their heels, like fire that preys
On a great city, while winds swell the roar
And houses dwindle in the mighty blaze :
E'en such a din did men and horses raise
Behind them : but they struggled onward yet,
As strong mules haul adown steep mountain ways
A beam or great ship-timber : toil and sweat
Distress their heart within them, although firmly set :

84

So these strained on : behind, the Aiantes twain
Kept back the foe, e'en as a mound doth stay
The rush of waters, stretched athwart the plain :
Wooded and strong, it bars the torrents' way
And lets them spreading o'er the champaign stray :
Onward they pour, yet cannot burst it through :
E'en so that gallant pair held back the fray,
While on them poured Troy's host, but chiefly two,
Anchises' valiant son and Hector brave and true.

85

Meanwhile in rout, as daws or starlings fly,
A thick dark cloud upon the face of air,
Screaming incessant, when afar they spy
A hawk, that to small birds doth havoc bear,
So before Hector and Æneas there
Loud screaming went the Danaans : fear did quench
Their thirst of conflict : while much armour fair
From Argive hands dropped down about the trench,
As in wild rout they fled : nor did the combat blench.

BOOK XVIII.

1

So like devouring fire both armies fought :
Meantime Antilochus, the swift of feet,
Achilleus' presence with the tidings sought :
Him found he set before his high-beaked fleet,
Brooding upon the doom e'en now complete,
While to his own strong heart he spoke in pain :
" O woe is me ! what means this new retreat ?
Why turn the long-haired Danaans back again
In tumult to their ships, disordered o'er the plain ?

2

" Pray heaven the gods be working not that ill
Which once my mother told me, and did say,
The best of Myrmidons, I living still,
Should fall by hand of Trojans in the fray,
Untimely banished from the light of day !
Dead of a surety is Menœtius' heir,
Rash man, on whom my heavy mandate lay,
The fire's fierce onset having quelled, to fare
Back to the fleet again, nor Hector's prowess dare."

3

While thus his heart and spirit inly wrought,
The son of noble Nestor drew him near
And told the grievous tidings that he brought,
Down pouring from his eyes the big warm tear :
“ Ah me ! brave son of Peleus, thou must hear
Right sorrowful tidings, which should ne’er have been :
Dead is Patroclus : round his corse severe
Rages the fight ; his naked corse I mean,
For mighty white-plumed Hector hath his armour sheen.”

4

He spoke : on him fell grief’s dark cloud apace :
He caught up ashes with both hands, and flung
Down on his head, disfiguring his fair face :
The black soot round his fragrant tunic clung.
Then in his hugeness hugely stretched along
In dust he lay, of glory disarrayed,
Rending his hair : the bondmaids, sorrow-wrung,
Spoil of Achilleus’ and Patroclus’ raid,
Came flocking from the hut, and piteous wailing made.

5

All with their hands smote on their breast thereat,
And sank unnerved : while pouring many a tear
Antilochus beside in sorrow sat,
Holding Achilleus as he groaned, for fear
He with the steel his windpipe should cut sheer,
So dire his cries. His mother heard the sound,
Down in the deep by her old father dear :
Shrilly she wailed : the nymphs assembled round,
Children of Nereus all, down in the sea profound.

6

Glauce, Thaleia, Speio 'mong them came,
Nesæe, Thoë, and Cymodoce,
Cymothoë and Halia, large-eyed dame,
Actæa, Limnoreia, Melite,
Iæra, Doto, and Amphithoë;
Agave and Dexamene were there,
Proto, Pherusa, and Dynamene,
With Panope and Galateia fair,
Mæra and Amatheia of the lovely hair :

7

And many another nymph that haunts the wave
Came hurrying up, soon as they heard her hail :
Thronging around, they filled the pearly cave :
Each beat her breast as Thetis led the wail :
“ Ye sister Nereids, hearken to my tale !
Give me your heed, that listening ye may know
What store my bosom hath of bitter bale.
O wretched me, a mother born to woe !
O birth of hero-sons, how keen thy travail-throe !

8

“ A son I bore, a hero strong and bold,
First of his kind : like sapling did he grow :
Him having reared, as plant in garden mould,
I sent to Troy to battle with the foe :
But home I ne'er shall welcome him, I know :
Ay, and e'en now, while yet he looks on day,
He mourns, nor can my presence heal his woe :
Yet thither will I hie, that learn I may
What grief hath found him out, bidding from war away.”

9

Thus having said, she passed from out the cave,
And with her went aloft the sister band,
Weeping, while round them parted the sea-wave.
Arrived at Troy, they filed along the strand
Where in close rank the Phthian vessels stand
About their chief. As forth his groanings brake,
His mother by him stood, and in her hand,
Lamenting shrill, her own son's head did take,
And pityingly the while in wingèd accents spake :

10

"Why weeps Achilleus? what is now thy care?
Speak out, nor hide the cause: all things are done
By Zeus, for which thou liftedst hands in prayer,
That to their ships the Achaian host should run,
And bear much woe, for want of thee, my son."
And, groaning deep, the chief in answer said:
"Mother, 'tis true, all this the god hath done:
But what avails it, now my friend is dead,
Patroclus, whom I loved e'en as my own dear head?

11

"Him have I lost: his arms doth Hector wear,
Mine own proud harness, wonderful to see,
Which the gods gave to Peleus, guerdon fair,
That day when with a man they bedded thee.
Ah! hadst thou with thy mates in the deep sea
Lived on, and Peleus ta'en a mortal wife!
'Twas that great sorrow in thy heart might be
For thy lost son: for never more in life
Shalt thou receive me home, returning from the strife.

12

“For life to me henceforth is sorry cheer,
Nor care I with my kind to look on day,
Save Hector first, down stricken by my spear,
Lie prone in dust, and breathe his life away,
And for the spoil of dead Patroclus pay.”
And Thetis spoke, weeping with tearful moan :
“Short will thy life be, child, for this thy say ;
For after Hector’s death straight comes thine own.”
Whom answered fierce Achilles in disdainful tone :

13

“Straight let me die, since to my dying friend
I lent no aid : far from his own abode
He fell, nor did mine arm the curse forefend.
Now to mine home I never shall take road,
Nor help from me hath to Patroclus flowed
Nor to those mates who died ’neath Hector’s hand.
Here sit I by the vessels, a dead load,
Myself the best of all the Achaian band
In war :—for better some in council-hall upstand.

14

“Perish foul strife from gods and mortals too,
And anger, which doth e’en the wise provoke ;
Which sweeter far than trickling honey-dew
In a man’s breast comes rising up like smoke.
’Twas thus my wrath ’gainst Agamemnon woke.
But now, though grieved, put we that matter by,
Bowing our dear hearts to compulsion’s yoke.
I go to find out Hector : let me die
When Zeus my end ordains, and the other gods on high !

15

"Great Heracles, he could not scape the tomb,
But fate and Hera's rancour made him tame :
So I, if fate award me a like doom,
Will lie down dead : but now I yearn for fame,
And long to make some deep-zoned Dardan dame,
Wiping with both her hands the tears that rill
Down her fair cheeks, weep loud for grief and shame ;
And let them know that I have long sat still.
So keep me not from fight, though fond : for forth I will."

16

And silver-footed Thetis spoke again :
"True are thy words, my darling : 'tis no wrong
From thy much-suffering mates to ward off bane :
But thy fair arms are kept Troy's host among,
Brazen, bright-gleaming : Hector, champion strong,
Flaunts them on his own shoulders : well I wot
Death dogs him close, nor shall his pride be long.
But thou the press of battle enter not,
Till thou behold me here, returning to this spot :

17

"For I return with earliest dawn of day,
From lord Hephæstus other arms to bring."
So saying, she wended from her son away,
And, turning, spoke to her sea-following :
"Now plunge you down where the deep waters spring,
Hie to the palace of our reverend sire,
And bear the tidings to the grey old king :
I seek Olympus and the lord of fire,
If he will make my son fresh arms at my desire."

18

This said, beneath the deep they plunged again,
While she, fair Thetis, borne on her white feet,
Passed to Olympus. But the Achaian train,
By murderous Hector driven in wild retreat,
Fled on to Hellespontus and the fleet.
Nor haply had they dragged the breathless frame
Of brave Patroclus from the arrowy sleet,
For man and horse once more upon them came,
And Hector, Priam's son, more fierce than fiercest flame.

19

Thrice by the feet grasped Hector the dead wight,
To drag him home, and shouted to his band :
Thrice the Aiantes, clothed in resolute might,
Enforced him back : he, with firm valour manned,
Now clave the press, now shoutingly made stand,
Swerving no step : as shepherds strive in vain
To force a lion, whose great wrath is fanned
To flame by hunger, from a victim slain,
So vainly on brave Hector drove the Aiantes twain,

20

To part him from the corpse : and now indeed
Forth he had dragged it, and much glory won,
But swift-foot Iris, like the wind for speed,
Down from Olympus came to Peleus' son,
By Hera sent, marked of immortals none,
Nor Zeus : and standing at his side she spake :
" Pelides, rise, of men thou fiercest one !
Bring succour to Patroclus, for whose sake
Grim battle at the ships the warring armies make.

21

“Slaying and slain, each other they destroy :
These ward off violence from their comrade dead,
While those rush on, to drag to windy Troy
The corpse : but Hector most of all is fed
With conqueror’s hope : fain would he fix the head
On a stake’s top, cut off from the fair frame.
But rise, lie down no longer ; thou shouldst dread
Lest thy dear friend become the wild dog’s game :
For scorn will be thy meed, should he come back with shame.”

22

And the divine fleet-foot Achilleus spake :
“Fair Iris, say, what god hath sent thee down ?”
And wind-swift Iris did her answer make :
“’Twas Hera sent me, queen of large renown ;
Nor great Kronion knows me hither boune,
Nor the other gods who dwell above the snow
That resteth ever on Olympus’ crown.”
“And how,” returned Achilleus, “shall I go
Amid the warring ranks ? mine arms are with the foe.

23

“Nor would my mother let me arm for fight
Till back she should return, who now is gone
To bring from lord Hephæstus harness bright.
Nor know I chief whose armour I could don,
Save Aias’ shield, the seed of Telamon :
But he is battling in the van, I ween,
Wielding his spear above Menætiüs’ son.”
To whom made answer Iris, wind-swift queen :
“Ay, sooth, we know it well : they have thine armour sheen.

24

"Yet hie thee to the trench, and there display
Thyself to Troy, if so she may forbear
From fight, and Argos, wearied with long fray
May rest awhile, respiring in cool air."
She spoke and passed aloft: but Peleus' heir
Rose up, Zeus' darling: and Athene spread
Her tasseled Ægis o'er his shoulders fair,
And with a golden halo crowned his head,
And lit thereon a flame, which living splendours fed.

25

As from a city smoke flies up to heaven,
From a far isle, round which the enemies fight
Who all day long in bitter feud have striven
About the town: then with the fall of night
Gleam beacons in long file, and the great light
Darts flaring up, for neighbour-tribes to view,
If so it may their succouring barks invite;
So from Achilleus' head the blaze upflew;
He stood beside the trench, nor joined the Achaian crew,

26

Such honour paid he to his mother's word.
He stood and shouted: Pallas cried withal
Beside him, and in Troy wild tumult stirred.
Like the clear ringing of a trumpet's call
When murderous foemen hem a leaguered wall,
So clear Achilleus' voice rose o'er the war:
But when that brazen voice was heard, they all
Thrilled in each vein: the steeds that whirled the car,
Sleek-coated, turned them back, snuffing sharp woes from far.

27

Cowed too with terror, when they saw the fire
Tower o'er his head, were the car-drivers stout,
Fire by Athene kindled, ne'er to tire :
Thrice o'er the trench Achilleus sent his shout ;
Thrice Troy and her allies were rolled in rout :
Then fell twelve warriors in that moment brief,
Brave wights, their weapons and car-wheels about :
And gladly Argos rescued her dead chief,
And laid him on the couch: his friends stood round in grief.

28

With them Achilleus followed, swift of foot,
Dropping warm tears, to see his comrade slain
Stretched on the bier, with iron gashed and cut,
Whom erst with horse and chariot to war's plain
He had sent forth, nor home received again.
Then Hera, goddess with the oxen eyne,
Sent down the unwilling Sun beneath the main ;
And the Sun set, and Argos' sons divine
Rested from equal strife and battle's bitter tyne.

29

The Trojans, on their part, from war's debate
Retiring, loosed their horses' harness-gear,
Then flocked to council, ere their meal they ate.
Standing they met: none dared to sit, for fear,
Thus having seen Achilleus reappear.
First spoke Polydamas, most prudent wight,
He who alone saw fore and after clear :
Hector's compeer was he: both in one night
Were born: but this was chief in council, that in fight.

30

He now their hearts with apt monition plied :
" Bethink you deeply, comrades, as is meet.
I bid you hasten city-ward, nor bide
The daybreak in the field beside the fleet,
For walls are distant whither to retreat.
Long as that chieftain gave his anger way,
So long the toil was less our foe to beat ;
For I rejoiced as at the ships I lay,
Thinking those gallant barks full soon would be our prey.

31

" But now swift-foot Pelides much I dread :
So vehement is his soul, he will not care
To tarry in the plain, where head to head
Argos and Troy the chance of battle share,
But for our town will fight and women fair.
But list to me, for thus 'twill chance, I ween :
Now night has made the impetuous chief forbear :
But if to-morrow with his armour sheen
He find us here, too well will his great might be seen.

32

" Right thankful then shall be the man that flees
To reach Troy wall, and dogs and birds shall eat
Many a brave Trojan—ne'er may news like these
Assail mine ear !—but if we home retreat,
This night in council shall our forces meet,
While towers and portals, cased by workmen's hand
With long smooth planks in panoply complete,
Shall guard the town ; next morn our gallant band,
Arming with break of day, shall on the rampart stand.

33

“Worse will it be for him, if he should care
To assault our city: back will he return
E'en to the ships, what time his fiery pair
Are tired with coursing: but, howe'er he yearn,
Enter he shall not, nor our bulwarks burn:
Far sooner the swift dogs his flesh shall rend.”
Answered the white-plumed Hector, frowning stern:
“Thy timorous counsels like me not, good friend.
What? had ye not your fill when late by rampart penned?

34

“Erewhile men said, in Priam's city-walls
Much store was there of brass, much store of gold:
But now our goods have perished from our halls,
And many a fair possession hath been sold
To neighbour lands, since Zeus's love grew cold.
Now, since that god on me doth fame bestow
And lets me coop the Achaians in close hold,
No more thy fond thoughts to the people show,
For none of Trojan birth shall heed them: I say no.

35

“Come now, obey my bidding: take your meal
Ranked in the field, nor watch and ward forego:
And whoso for his goods keen fear doth feel,
Them let him bring and on the host bestow;
Far better be devoured by friend than foe.
Then, clad in arms while yet the morn is dim,
Upstir we at the fleet the battle-glow;
And if in truth their sea-born champion grim
Be risen beside the ships, belike the worse for him.

36

"I will not fly him, I, from out the din
Of the loud war, but front to front will stand :
So shall or he or I great glory win :
Fair-dealing is the war-god, and his hand
Oft slays the slayer." Thus Hector spake : his band
Loud shouted : fools ! for Pallas crazed their brain.
Hector they lauded, who ill counsel planned,
But none to praise Polydamas was fain,
Though wisdom spoke in him : so camped they on the plain.

37

But all night long the Achaians mourned the dead,
And first Pelides, sobbing, led their wail,
Laying his fierce hands that much blood had shed
With many a groan on the dear bosom pale :
As when a hunter takes from wooded vale
A lion's whelps, the parent, sorrow-wrung,
Comes after and pursues the spoiler's trail
Through many a glen, for deep his heart is stung.
And, groaning sore, he spoke the Myrmidons among :

38

"Ah me ! vain word of comfort sure was mine,
When to Menetius in the house that day
I said I would bring back his son divine
Conqueror of Troy, with ample share of prey.
But Zeus fulfils not all we men may say :
For both are fated the same earth to dye
In Troia here : for Peleus, warrior grey,
Shall ne'er receive me home with gladsome eye,
Nor Thetis, my loved mother ; but I here shall lie.

39

“ But now, sweet friend, since after thee I go,
I will not tomb thee, till the arms and head
I hither bring of Hector, thy great foe,
And slay twelve sons of Trojans gently bred
Above thy pyre: till then thou shalt lie dead
At the beaked ships, and dames about thy bier,
Lamenting night and day, their tears shall shed,
Whom we bore off by prowess and long spear
From the rich towns we sacked, to languaged mortals dear.”

40

This said, commandment due Achilleus gave
To place a caldron on the flame, that so
From gory stain Patroclus they might lave.
A caldron set they full in the fire's glow,
Poured water in, and kindled wood below :
The fire took hold, and made the stream to boil :
But when the wave 'gan heaving to and fro,
Then did they cleanse the corpse from gory soil,
And filled its gaping wounds with costly nine-year oil.

41

Then, laying it on a couch, from foot to head
They wrapped it in a cloth of gauzy sheen,
And o'er the couch a fair white mantle spread.
All night the mourning Myrmidons were seen
Around Achilleus, groaning in sad teen :
And Zeus bespoke his sister-wife divine :
“ At length thou hast thy will, my large-eyed queen,
Rousing to war Achilleus : sure the line
Of Argos' long-haired sons came forth from womb of thine.”

42

And queenly Hera thus bespoke her lord :
" What words are these, Kronion dreadfulest ?
A man may to a man perform his word,
Though he be mortal, nor so wise his breast :
And should not I, of goddesses the best,
Alike in birth, and seeing that I share
Thy bed, who bearest rule o'er all the blest,
Against Troy's sons my vengeful schemes prepare ?"
So, talking each to each, their minds they did declare.

43

But Thetis to Hephæstus' dwelling came,
Immortal, starry, framed with skill untold
All of bright brass by that deft artist lame.
Him found she at the bellows as of old,
Sweating : for tripods twenty were to mould,
Beside the palace-wall to have their stay.
To each one's base he fastened wheels of gold,
That of themselves to the gods' circle they
Might go and come back home, a marvel to survey.

44

Of the great work part was already done,
Yet lacked their ears, which duly to complete
He laboured, forging nails to fix them on.
Thus while he tasked him in the furnace-heat,
Near him came Thetis on her silver feet.
And Charis saw and met her, fair and young,
Beautiful-banded Charis, consort sweet
Of the lame monarch : to her hand she clung,
And called her by her name, and spoke with gentle tongue :

45

"Why seek'st thou, honoured Thetis, our retreat?
Scarce hast thou crossed its threshold till to-day.
But come, that I may feast thee as is meet."
The goddess spoke, and onward led the way,
And set her on a throne with silver gay
Embossed, her feet upon a footstool stayed,
And called to deft Hephæstus, and did say:
"Hither, Hephæstus! Thetis needs thine aid."
And the lame artist then befitting answer made:

46

"A great and honoured guest in truth is she,
Who saved me from the fall that wrought me bane,
When my curst mother was for hiding me,
Finding me lame: then tortured had I lain,
But Thetis and Eurynome were fain
To take me up, Eurynome that springs
From reffluent Ocean: so they healed my pain,
And for nine years I wrought them curious things,
Buckles, and chains, and cups, and twisted armlet-rings,

47

"In a smooth cave: around it Ocean's flow
With murmurous foam kept circling all the day:
Nor did one mortal or immortal know
For those long years the place wherein I lay,
But Thetis and Eurynome, only they.
Now 'neath my roof she sits: great need that I
To fair-haired Thetis my life's debt should pay.
But thou make speed and feast her courteously,
While I remove my tools and put the bellows by."

48

Then from his anvil rose the grim swarth god,
Limping, on tottering legs and ankles stayed.
The bellows from the fire he took, and stowed
In silver chest his implements of trade,
Then wiped him with a sponge, and cleanly made
Face, hands, and neck, and bosom's bristly hide, `
His tunic donned, and with a stout staff's aid
Limped forth : a golden maiden on each side
Like living handmaid moved, her master's steps to guide.

49

Their tongues can speak, their minds can understand,
And Heaven hath dowered them with all arts complete :
So propped they their lame lord on either hand,
Who, limping still, by Thetis took his seat,
And pressed her hand, and gently did entreat :
" What brings fair Thetis to our home to-day,
Till now scarce traversed by those silver feet ?
Speak what thou wilt ; my mind is to obey
And grant thee thy desire, if so I can and may."

50

And Thetis made reply, with many a tear :
" Hephæstus, of all gods in heaven that bide
Has any borne such load of grief severe
As Zeus hath heaped on me, past all beside ?
Of all sea-nymphs he chose me to be bride
Of a mere mortal, Peleus : sore compelled
To a man's couch I stooped my maiden pride :
Now my weak lord at home in piteous eld
Lies helpless, and my cup with other woes is swelled.

51

“A son I bore, a hero strong and bold,
First of his kind: like sapling did he grow:
Him having reared, as plant in garden mould,
I sent to Troy, to battle with the foe:
But home I ne’er shall welcome him, I know:
Ay, and e’en now, while yet he looks on day,
He pines, nor can my presence heal his woe.
The maid that Argos gave him for a prey
Was snatched by Atreus’ son from his brave hands away:

52

“Grieving for her he languished, while the foe
At their ship-sterns the chased Achaians pent,
Nor let them from the fleet to battle go:
Before him low the Argive elders bent,
And proffered gifts to change his stern intent:
Yet still himself refused to ward off fate;
But in his arms Patroclus forth he sent,
And bade much people on his footsteps wait;
And all day long they strove beside the Scæan gate:

53

“And that same day the city had been sped,
But lord Apollo in the forefront slew
Menœtius’ son, who many a life had shed,
And gave to Hector fame beyond his due.
So now in suppliance at thy knees I sue,
Wouldst thou on him, my short-lived son, bestow
Helmet, and shield, and close-fit cuishes new,
And breastplate: for his own the conquering foe
Hath ravished: and on earth he grovels in his woe.”

54

And the divine Hephæstus answering saith :
"Take cheer, nor let this care thy soul amate.
Would that as surely I could guard his breath .
From the shrill doom-stroke in his hour of fate,
As goodly armour shall attend him straight,
Which whoso sees shall wonder in his heart."
Thus having said, he left her where she sate,
And to the bellows went : with dexterous art
He turned them to the fire, and bade them do their part.

55

Full twenty bellows on the furnace blew,
From whose strained jaws came forth a various blast :
E'en as Hephæstus pleased his work to do,
From weak to strong, from strong to weak it passed.
Then stubborn copper in the fire he cast,
And tin, and precious gold, and silver bright,
And on its base set up the anvil vast :
His left hand grasped the fire-tongs : in the right
A hammer he took up, of massive force to smite.

56

First a great shield he made him, strong and fair,
With threefold rim and strap of silver chain.
Five were its plates ; and many a marvel there
Was wrought by cunning hands, earth, sky, and main,
The sun, the moon, and all the starry train,
Pleiads and Hyads, crowning heaven's high steep,
Orion, and the star men call the Wain,
Which, turning, on Orion watch doth keep,
And only of the stars ne'er bathes in Ocean's deep.

57

Two cities there of languaged men he wrought :
In one were wedding rites and feasting gay :
The brides by torchlight from their bowers they brought,
And led them through the town : the nuptial lay
Soared upward : while 'mid pipe and cittern's play
Lithe dancers whirled and eddied : maid and wife
Admiring stood, the pageant to survey,
Each in her doorway : and a concourse rife
Had filled the market-square, wherein two men had strife.

58

About the fine of a slain man they strove :
This swore he had paid all, and that denied :
And each his cause to quick decision drove :
Loud backing each the applauding people cried :
The heralds checked the throng : in circle wide
Sat the grave elders : heralds' wands had they,
Which holding, rose the pleaders on each side :
And in the midst two golden talents lay,
A guerdon for that man whose cause should gain the day.

59

But round the other town two hosts allied
Sat in bright steel : two ways their minds were swayed,
To sack it wholly, or its wealth divide.
Yet not for that the leaguered folk obeyed
Their hard demand, but plots of ambush laid.
Wives, babes, and aged sires with hoary head
Stood on the wall, a garrison displayed :
While forth the warriors moved with stealthy tread,
By Ares, lord of war, and stern Athene led.

60

Golden were they, and clad in golden dress,
With beauteous harness, as for gods is meet,
Each tall of stature : but the host was less.
So when these came where they should take their seat,
E'en to the river, where in midday heat
Flock for their drink the cattle, parched and dry,
There sat they down, cased o'er with brass complete :
And two keen scouts were stationed, not too nigh,
Watching the crook-horned kine and lazy sheep to spy.

61

On came the drove : two herdmen led the way,
Playing their pipes, nor dreaming aught of ill.
The ambush saw, and sprang upon their prey,
And harried the sleek oxen at their will
And snow-fleeced sheep : the shepherds too they kill.
But when the noise of herds and herdmen slain
Reached the proud foe, in council seated still,
On their high-stepping steeds they mount amain
And gallop in hot haste, and soon the spot they gain.

62

So, hurling brazen spears, in fierce debate
They stood and fought beside the river-ford :
Tumult was there, and Strife, and deadly Fate :
One wight she held yet living, though fresh gored,
And one unwounded yet by lance or sword,
And one she dragged, a dead man, by the heel.
A robe she wore whereon much blood was poured :
Like living folk these fought, and waved the steel,
And each his dead man dragged with more than warrior's zeal.

63

There too he wrought a soft rich fallow field,
Broad and thrice-ploughed : and many a sturdy swain
Hither and thither his slow oxen wheeled.
Still as each won the end of the long plain,
A man reached forth a brimming cup to drain
Of honeyed wine : so furrowed they the mould,
Eager the deep-soiled fallow's end to gain :
Behind them it looked black, though formed of gold,
As new-ploughed field should look ; a prodigy untold !

64

There a deep corn-field, waving to the wind,
He wrought : the reapers their sharp sickles plied,
And, as they reaped, the swathes still fell behind,
While some in sheaves with bands the binders tied.
Three binders o'er them stood, the work to guide,
While boys behind in armfuls sheaf on sheaf
Unceasing to the binders' hand supplied ;
And at the head of the long row their chief
With staff in hand stood silent, and his heart was lief.

65

Under an oak the heralds dressed the food,
A mighty ox new slaughtered : women there
White pounded barley for the reapers strewed.
There too he wrought a teeming vineyard fair,
Beautiful, golden ; black the clusters were,
And the grapes hung from poles of silver shine.
Round it a dark trench ran and wattles rare
Of tin : the pathway stretched in one thin line,
Where to and fro they passed who would unlade the vine.

66

And youths and maids were there, a lovely band,
Their young hearts tender as the budding spring,
Each with an osier basket in his hand,
To store the honeyed fruit and homeward bring :
While a fair boy on the lyre's silver string
Made pleasant music that blithe train among,
And with sweet voice, that well knew how to sing,
Sang Linus ; and accordant to the song
The dancers plied their feet, and gaily tripped along.

67

There made he oxen, with horns branching tall :
Of tin each beast was framed, and precious gold :
Lowing they moved to pasture from the stall
By a loud river, through thick reeds that rolled.
Four herdmen, golden all, the train controlled,
And nine swift dogs attendant walked the ground :
While in the van two lions had laid hold
Of a fat bull, whom with loud bellowing sound
They dragged in piteous sort, pursued by youth and hound.

68

The great bull-hide the monsters rend, and drain
The entrails and black blood with fierce delight,
While the vexed herdmen give them chase in vain,
And their swift dogs encourage to the fight.
The daunted dogs stand by, and dare not bite,
But, barking without cease, their distance keep.
There too a fold he wrought, that artist wight,
In a fair glade, a flock of glistening sheep,
With stalls, and shepherds' huts, and cotes wherein to sleep.

69

A dance-ground too he wrought, that artist famed,
Like that which erst for Ariadne queen
Wise Dædalus in ample Cnossus framed.
There blooming youths and maidens fair of mien,
Holding each other's hands, to dance were seen ;
These clad in linen fine and rarified,
While those had tunics bright with oily sheen :
These on their head wore chaplets ; at their side
Those carried golden swords, with silver baldricks tied.

70

Now with their cunning feet they circled round,
As when a potter sits him down and tries
If his smooth wheel will run along the ground,
And now they crossed each other, slanting-wise.
About them a great crowd with glad surprise
Stood, and two tumblers, raising a blithe song,
Turned ever and anon before their eyes.
Last made he Ocean, that great river strong,
To wind with sinuous course the extreme verge along.

71

Then, when the shield was wholly finishèd,
He made a fire-bright corslet for the breast,
Made too a helmet large, fit for the head,
Beautiful, dædal, and a golden crest ;
Greaves too he made of purest tin and best.
So, having laboured all, the fire's dark king
Set down the load before his glorious guest,
Who, hawk-like, from Olympus made her spring,
Hasting to her brave son Hephæstus' gift to bring.

BOOK XIX.

1

Now, bearing gods and mortals light and heat,
Eos rose up from Ocean's stream profound ;
And with her burden Thetis reached the fleet.
Stretched by Patroclus' side her son she found,
Lamenting shrill : and many friends around
Wept : and the goddess passed through the sad train,
And clasped his hand, and breathed a tender sound :
“ Now let the dead be dead, though sore our pain,
My darling, since 'twas Heaven that stretched him on the plain :

2

“ But thou this armour from Hephæstus take,
Whose glory none till now did e'er endue.”
Down at his feet she laid it, as she spake,
And loud it rang, all dædal, through and through.
Fear seized his mates, nor had they heart to view
The dazzling sheen, but quailed, though ne'er so stout :
But as Achilles saw, more wroth he grew,
And 'neath his brow his eyes like fire shone out,
And in his hands with joy the gift he turned about.

3

At length, when sated with that pleasure sweet,
In wingèd words his mother he bespake :
“ Mother, the arms are goodly, as is meet
The gods alone, not mortal men, should make :
Now will I put them on : but sore I quake
Lest noisome worms in that dear flesh be bred,
Lest the fly enter where the spear-wound brake,
Breeding decay, and desecrate the dead,
And the whole body rot, seeing that life is fled.”

4

And silver-footed Thetis thus did say :
“ Child, let that trouble cease to work thee pain :
Myself will labour to keep far away
Those tameless flies that feast upon the slain.
Nay, though a year unburied he remain,
His flesh shall be the same, or e'en more fair.
But thou to council call the hero-train,
Renounce thy wrath 'gainst Atreus' princely heir,
Then gird thee for the fight, and valour's vesture wear.”

5

So saying, with strong force his heart she manned,
While through the nostrils of Patroclus slain
She breathed ambrosia, that the flesh might stand.
But he went forth, Achilles, by the main,
With terrible shout, and roused the hero-train.
E'en they who wont to tarry at the fleet,
Steerers of barks, and dealers-out of grain,
E'en these came forth in council for to meet,
Seeing once more Achilles after long retreat.

6

There too moved on those ministers of fight,
Tydides and Odysseus, limping lame,
Propped on a spear; for yet their wounds did bite:
First sat they down in council: last there came
King Agamemnon, though the first in fame,
Hurt too: for likewise him in battle's heat
Antenor's son had wounded with sure aim.
So when the council was at length complete,
Upstood therein and spoke Achilleus, swift of feet.

7

"Atrides, better had it been for each,
Thyself and me, what time, with choler filled,
For a mere girl we strove in angry speech,
Had Artemis that day the damsel killed,
Then, when Lyrnessus town I sacked and pill'd:
So many Argives by the foeman's hand,
While I was wroth, had not their life-blood spilled.
'Twas Hector's gain and Troy's: but Argos' band
Long of my strife and thine, I ween, shall feel the brand.

8

"But leave we our past feud, though sore its pain,
Bowing our dear heart 'neath compulsion's sway.
Now, for myself, my anger I refrain:
I would not always chafe: but thou to fray
The long-haired Argives urge without delay,
That I may front the Trojans yet, and see
If they will sleep abroad: ere set of day,
I ween, the flier will gladly bend his knee,
Whoso shall 'scape the charge of my good spear and me."

9

He ceased : and Argos' sons were glad at heart,
For that Achilleus had renounced his heat.
And Agamemnon, answering, took his part
From where he sat, not rising to his feet :
" Friends, Danaan heroes, warrior chiefs ! 'tis meet
To hear the speaker : it were grievous wrong
To break the utterance of a soul discreet.
How should one listen in a clamorous throng
Or speak ? for rude retort may trip the nimblest tongue.

10

" To Peleus' son I speak : but hear me each
And all, ye Argives, and my words perpend.
Oft have ye chid me with upbraiding speech,
Blaming me sore, for that I did offend.
Yet did I not the crime that now ye shend :
'Twas Zeus, and Fate, and she that walks in night,
Erinnys, on my mind did Até send,
That day I robbed Achilleus of his right.
Heaven worketh its full will, and what can mortal wight ?

11

" Até is Zeus' first daughter : lo, she treads
On tender feet, fell pest, nor on the ground
Tramples, but walks in silence o'er men's heads,
Harming mankind : and many hath she bound.
Nay, Zeus she harmed erewhile, the most renowned
Of gods and men : yet o'er his mind of old
Hera, though woman, webs of falsehood wound,
E'en on that day when Heracles the bold
Alcmena should bring forth in Thebe's tower-girt hold.

12

"Mid all the gods he spake in boastful tone :
'Give ear, ye gods and goddesses, I pray,
Till the sure purpose of my heart be shown :
The powers of childbirth shall bring forth to-day
A man who o'er his neighbours shall hold sway,
One of my seed, mine own true progeny.'
And thus with cunning in her heart did say
Queen Hera : 'Nay, thou wilt thy words belie,
Nor let them end in act, dread Monarch of the sky.

13

"Come now, and swear me a great oath of doom
That he o'er all his neighbours shall be king
Who on this day shall leave a woman's womb
Of mortal men from thine own seed that spring.'
She spoke : and Zeus perceived not the false thing,
But swore an oath, which after he did rue.
And Hera from Olympus' height took wing
And reached Achaian Argos, where she knew
The wife of Sthenelus dwelt, a noble dame and true.

14

"Seven months within that lady's womb had lain
An unborn son : him Hera brought to day
Ere his due time : Alcmena's travail-pain
She checked the while, and made the birth-hour stay :
Herself to Zeus the tidings did convey :
'Lo, news I bring, lord of the levin-fire :
Born is a man who shall the Argives sway,
His name Eurystheus, Sthenelus his sire,
Thine offspring : who so fit to wield a wide empire ?'

15

"She spoke: but keen grief stabbed him to the core:
He caught up Até by her tresses bright,
In vehement anger, and a great oath swore
That ne'er again to heaven's star-spangled height
She should come back, who worketh all despite:
Then swung and hurled her from the starry land,
Who quickly 'mid the works of men did light:
And oft he groaned when his dear son he scanned,
Slaving unworthy tasks beneath Eurystheus' hand.

16

"So I, while Hector did our thousands slay,
Kept brooding still o'er Até's fell despite.
And now, since Zeus took my true mind away,
The wrong I did full fain would I requite.
But thou rise up, and rouse the rest to fight:
Thine shall be all those gifts as I have sworn,
All that Odysseus promised yesternight.
Or wilt thou stay till from my ship be borne
The gifts, that thou mayst see how I atone my scorn?"

17

Answered thereto Pelides, swift of feet:
"King Agamemnon, glorious without peer,
For those thy gifts, or give them, as is meet,
Or hold them back; but now be battle's cheer
Our business, for we may not parley here
Or weave delays, for work is much to do:
Needs must men see Achilleus with his spear
Dealing black death to Ilion's cursèd crew:
And ye, my friends, likewise remember and be true."

18

And many-wiled Odysseus answering said :
" Brave as thou art, Pelides, speak not so,
Nor bid the Achaians fasting and unfed
Advance on Troy to combat with the foe :
For no brief struggle will be ours, I trow,
When first together the two armies wight
Clash, and their hearts with heaven-sent fury glow :
Not so : but bid the Achaians ere they fight [might.
Fill them with corn and wine : for those are strength and

19

" For a man may not fight the whole long day
E'en to the set of sun without a meal :
But though his heart still urge him to the fray,
Nathless his limbs grow slack, and he doth feel
Hunger and thirst, and his knees stagger and reel ;
But whoso being filled with wine and meat
All day doth stand against the foeman's steel,
His heart is bold within him, nor his feet
Wax weary, till both hosts alike from war retreat.

20

" But come, dismiss we now, and bid prepare
Seemly refection for the host each one,
And to the midst let Agamemnon bear
Those goodly things he gives thee for thine own,
That all may see, and thou thy pride atone.
And let him standing swear an oath, to bind
His soul, that ne'er Briseis he hath known
As men and women wout : so let thy mind
Rest quiet in thy breast, and thou once more be kind.

21

“ Then let him feast thee in his hut, that so
Thou lack not aught that doth to thee belong.
And thou, O king, in after time shalt know
To be more just : 'tis well when monarch strong
Makes compensation, having first done wrong.”
And royal Agamemnon spoke again :
“ Thy words, Odysseus, please me like a song :
All things thou hast said well : myself would fain
Swear, nor shall this my oath be false or lightly ta'en.

22

“ But let Achilleus tarry, though for fight
He hanker sore, and tarry all the rest,
Till the gifts come, and a sure oath we plight.
And now upon thyself I lay my hest :
Choose from Achaia's youths the first and best,
And fetch the presents from my hut, and bring
Likewise the women : and be instant quest
Made by Talthybius through the camp's wide ring,
Till that a boar he find for Zeus and Helius king.”

23

And answer thus made swift Æacides :
“ King Agamemnon, first in place and fame,
Some other time may fit such cares as these,
When the fierce battle becomes slack and tame
And in my breast less hotly burns the flame ;
But now they lie all mangled, who were slain
By Hector, when the gods made great his name :
And you, ye call for food, when far more fain
The Achaians would I arm, and lead them to the plain,

24

"Fasting and hungry : then with set of day,
When our revenge is won, the banquet spread.
Till then shall never to my throat find way
Or food or drink, now my dear friend is dead,
Who in my hut by sharp-edged iron sped,
Turned to the doorway, stark and rigid lies,
And grieving mates their tears around him shed :
Wherefore not this is pleasant in mine eyes,
But slaughter, and spilt blood, and men's expiring sighs."

25

And many-wiled Odysseus made reply :
"Mighty Achilleus, terror of the foe,
Stronger and braver far art thou than I,
Yet thee in wisdom I may well outgo
Not less ; for elder I, and more I know.
So hear me now : men soon of war grow stale,
Wherein much stubble doth the ground bestrow,
But scant the harvest, when Zeus turns the scale,
Zeus, who to man in fight dispenses bliss and bale.

26

"Not with the belly may we mourn our slain,
Seeing that many are mown down alway
By ranks : for when should man have pause from pain ?
No—bury we our dead who fall in fray
With pitiless hearts, lamenting one short day :
And let them who survive the bloody field,
Mind them of meat and drink, that so we may
Fight with the foemen bravely and not yield,
Our persons, as our hearts, with complete armour steeled.

27

“Wherefore let none for further summons wait :
Be this the summons : who remains at ease
Here by the vessels, ill shall be his fate.
So march forth all and battle’s thirst appease,
Rousing fierce warfare ’gainst our enemies.”
Thus saying, he called to Nestor’s valiant seed,
Likewise to Meges, Thoas, Mériones,
And Melanippus eke and Lycomedes,
And to Atrides’ hut together they made speed.

28

Soon as the word was said, the deed was done :
Seven goodly tripods from the hut they bore,
And caldrons twenty, glittering every one,
And twice six horses, even as he swore :
Seven dames they led, too, skilled in Pallas’ lore,
The eighth Briseis : and Odysseus weighed
Ten golden talents : bearing which, before
He went : and others other gifts conveyed,
Which in the middle space at the chiefs’ feet they laid.

29

Then Agamemnon rose : and close at hand
Talthybius, whose strong voice ne’er knew decay,
Holding the boar in readiness, took his stand.
And forth Atrides drew his knife, that lay
By his sheathed sword, and cut the hairs away
From the boar’s forehead, and to Zeus did rear
Hands of entreaty : all in silence they
Sat, as was meet, the monarch’s voice to hear :
And, looking to broad heaven, he spoke in accents clear :

30

"Bear witness, Zeus, highest and noblest both,
Earth, Helius, and Erinnyes, who below
Chastise the man that sweareth a false oath,
Ne'er have I on Briseis, as ye know,
Laid hand to clasp her: in my dwelling so,
E'en as she came, untouched hath she remained.
If falsely I swear aught, may Heaven bestow
On me their lot who have an oath profaned."
Then the boar's throat he severed, and its life-blood drained.

31

The beast Talthybius to the yawning main
Tossed, to regale the fishes: then uprose
Achilleus, and bespoke the assembled train:
"Zeus sire, thou giv'st to mortals mighty woes:
Ne'er had mine heart been kindled as a foe's
'Gainst Atreus' son, nor he in my despite
Had ta'en the girl unprompted, but Zeus chose
That death should come to many an Argive wight.
Now get you to your meal, that we may join in fight."

32

He spoke, and bade the council rise with speed:
They to their ships went scattering everywhere:
While to the gifts the Myrmidons gave heed
And to Achilleus' ship did straightway bear,
Stowed in the hut, and set the women there:
The horses to the herd the attendants led.
Briseis then, like Aphrodite fair,
Soon as she saw Patroclus gored and dead,
Shrilled forth a piteous wail, and her arms round him spread:

33

With her two hands she tare in mourner wise
Her breast, her delicate neck, her lovely face,
And thus spoke out, a goddess to men's eyes :
" Ah me, Patroclus, first in my dear grace !
Alive I left thee, parting from this place :
Now, coming back, I find thee dead and gored :
Thus sorrow on sorrow comes on me apace :
For whom my parents chose, my wedded lord,
Him saw I at the wall struck through with deadly sword :

34

" Ay, and my brethren, of one mother born,
Three gallant men, in that same battle died :
Yet bad'st thou me not weep, as one forlorn,
But saidst, I yet should be Achilles' bride,
And thou wouldst bear me home, and there provide
The nuptial banquet : wherefore I bemoan
Thee, ever kind, nor shall my tears be dried."
So wailed she : and thereon the rest did groan
As for Patroclus' fate, yet mourning each her own.

35

And round Achilles still the chieftains pressed,
Bidding him eat : but groaning he denied :
" Friends, would ye hearken to a friend's request,
Bid not my grieving heart be satisfied
With meat and drink, for sorely am I tried.
Well may I fast until the set of day."
So saying, he put the other chiefs aside :
Only Odysseus and Crete's lord did stay
With Nestor, Atreus' sons, and Phoenix, horsemen grey,

1 566 181

36

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11 581 186

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581 186

Striving to cheer him in his heavy woe :
Yet would that grieving heart receive no cheer,
Till in the teeth of combat he should go :
Then, taking thought, he spoke with many a tear :
“ How oft ere now, ill-starred companion dear,
A goodly banquet for thy friend to taste
Hast thou set forth in this our dwelling here,
What time the roused Achaians would make haste
With much-bereaving war the hosts of Troy to waste !

37

“ Now thou art stretched out slain : I, grieving still,
Eat not, though store is here of wine and bread :
For never could my soul endure worse ill,
Not though I heard that my old sire was dead,
Who haply now in Phthia tears doth shed
For lack of me, while I in alien air
Wage war with Troy for Helen's hated head,
Or he, the child of Scyros, my loved heir,
If yet he lives to bless me, Pyrrhus young and fair.

38

“ For hope my heart within my breast beguiled
That here in Troia I alone should fall,
And thou wouldst voyage home, and fetch my child
From Scyros in thy ship, and show him all
My goods, my slaves, my lofty-vaulted hall :
For Peleus, as I deem, of fond regret
Is dead, or just survives, bowed by the thrall
Of tyrannous eld, and aye expecting yet
The heavy-footed hour that tells my life is set.”

39

So wailed he : and the chiefs in sobs did melt,
Each thinking of his dear ones left behind.
Kronion saw them mourn, and pity felt,
And to Athene spoke words swift as wind :
“ Child, thou forsak'st Achilleus : hath thy mind
No forethought left for that brave chief of thine ?
Lo, at the ships he sits, to woe resigned,
Mourning his friend : the rest to food and wine
Are gone, while he unfed these weary hours doth pine.

40

“ Go, drop thou nectar and ambrosia sweet
Into his breast, lest hunger work him ill.”
So saying, he quickened her else willing feet.
In fashion like a hawk, long-winged and shrill,
She shot through ether from Olympus hill,
While the hosts armed them for the near attack :
And drops of heavenly strength she did instil
Into his breast, for fear his knees be slack :
Then to her sire's great house eftsoons she hied her back.

41

From the swift ships the host came pouring forth :
As when from Zeus the thickening snow-flakes flee
'Neath the keen blast of ether-gendered North,
So thickening the dense helmets, bright to see,
Flocked from the ships, and spears of ashen tree,
Many an arched corslet, many a bossy shield.
Up shot the glitter, and earth laughed for glee
At the bright brass, and loud the thunder pealed
Of footsteps : and 'mid these Achilleus armed for field.

42

Loud gnashed his teeth, and brightly glared his eyne
Like flashing fire : his heart with grief was stung :
Maddening he clothed him in the arms divine,
And first the cuishes donned, which closely clung
Around him, clasped with buckles' silver tongue :
Then to his bosom made the cuirass fast,
The sword, bright-studded, round his shoulders slung,
All brazen : next his buckler, strong and vast,
He grappled : like the moon, a far-off beam it cast.

43

As when on seamen's eyes a light doth shine
Of fire enkindled on some mountain scaur
In a lone place : them o'er the fishy brine
The fierce storms hurry from their friends afar :
So from that dædal garniture of war
A light came forth and up to ether shone :
Then donned he his strong helmet : like a star
The horse-tail flared, and all about were blown
The hairs Hephæstus set so thickly on the cone.

44

Then did Achilles prove those arms, to try
If that therein his glorious limbs could run.
Like wings they served, and lifted him on high.
Last from its case drew forth the valiant son
His father's spear, strong, massive, weighty : none
Of Argos' seed that ashen beam could wave,
But only Achilles : Cheiron long ago
On Pelion's summit cut it down, and gave
To Peleus, his great sire, fell slaughter to the brave.

45

Meantime the squires his chariot, nothing slack,
Yoked, fastening strap and collar, as was meet :
The fiery steeds they bitted, and drew back
The flowing reins to the well-soldered seat :
Automedon climbed the car with nimble feet,
Grasping the glittering whip of golden wire :
Behind in glorious panoply complete
Mounted Achilleus, like the sun's red fire,
And fiercely he cheered on the horses of his sire :

46

"Xanthus and Balios ! far-renowned pair
Born of Podarge ! let your busy brain
Some other counsel ponder, how to bear
Your master home, when war has had her drain,
Nor leave him as ye left Patroclus slain."
Whom from the harness that fleet horse bespoke,
Xanthus, and drooped his head, while all his mane
Trailed on the ground, escaping 'neath the yoke :
And Hera in his breast a human voice awoke :

47

"Ay, great Achilleus, we will save thee now ;
Yet is thy death-day near, nor ours the blame :
No—'tis high Heaven, and Fate that will not bow.
For not that sluggish were our feet or lame
Did the proud foe Patroclus' body shame,
But Leto's son, that glorious potency,
Slew him in fight, and won for Hector fame.
For us, like swiftest Zephyr we can fly :
But thine own fate is fixed, by God and man to die."

48

Then ceased he, for the dumb Erinnyes stayed
The fountain of his voice: and with sharp gall
Swift-foot Achilleus wrathful answer made:
“Xanthus, why bode me death? thou hast no call.
Right well I know that 'tis my fate to fall
Here in this land, from sire and mother far;
Yet will I not forbear for great or small
Till to Troy's host I give their fill of war.”
He said, and in the van, loud shouting, urged his car.

BOOK XX.

1

So, breathing war, the Achaïans armour donned
Round thee, Pelides, at the vessels tall;
And Troy too armed her on the slope beyond.
Then Zeus sent Themis down heaven's steep, to call
The immortals to a council: she through all
Passed on, and bade them in Zeus' court convene.
Nor, saving Ocean, absent from that hall
Was river-god, nor nymph of fountain sheen
Or guardian of fair grove or pasture grassy green.

2

There sat they, at the Father's house arrived,
'Mid shapely pillars, which with cunning brain
Helpful Hephæstus for the Sire contrived.
So met they: nor Poseidon did disdain
The goddess' call, but hied him from the main,
Sat in the midst, and did Zeus' mind inquire:
"Why call'st thou us, great Thunderer, yet again?
Dost thou for Troy and Argos aught desire?
For now, meseems, their feud is blazing unto fire."

3

And cloud-compelling Zeus thus made reply :
"Shaker of Earth, their name thou hast well guessed
Who ask my care : I heed them, though they die.
For me, I tarry on Olympus' crest,
There sitting, watch the fray : but ye, the rest,
Make speed till 'mid the warring hosts ye light,
And lend to each your aid, as seems you best :
For if alone with Troy Achilleus fight,
One hour they will not stand 'gainst his all-conquering might.

4

"E'en his mere look aforetime scared them all ;
And now, when he is wroth for his friend's blood,
I fear lest spite of Fate he sack their wall."
So spoke the god, and roused undying feud :
And the powers marched to war, with diverse mood.
Athene queen, and Hera, large-eyed dame,
And Poseidaon, and Hermeias shrewd,
Went shipward ; and Hephæstus, glaring flame,
Beside them : and his limbs moved strongly, although lame.

5

Troyward went Ares : Phœbus with him trod,
Leto, and she, the dealer of love's smart,
And Artemis, and Xanthus, Ilion's god.
Long as the gods from battle moved apart,
The Achaians joyed, exulting in their heart,
Seeing Achilleus after long retreat :
But through each Trojan bosom fear did dart
What time they saw that champion, swift of feet,
Like murderous Ares' self, in panoply complete.

6

But when to war at length the gods came down,
Uprose fell Discord: and Athene cried
One while beside the trench without the town,
One while upon the shore that echoed wide:
And Ares, like a storm, with shouts replied,
Cheering the Trojans from their topmost tower,
Or running o'er the mound by Simois' side.
So the blest gods, inspiring either power,
Encountered each with each, and loosed the deadly stour.

7

Above the eternal Sire his thunder pealed:
Below Poseidon shook both hill and plain:
From foot to summit fountful Ida reeled,
The city, and the vessels by the main:
Trembled too Hades in his gloomy reign,
And leapt up with a scream, lest o'er his head
Poseidon cleave the solid earth in twain
And open the pale kingdoms of the dead,
Horrible, foul with blight, which e'en immortals dread.

8

So, as they clashed, went forth the wild uproar.
Against Poseidon king in conflict stood
Phœbus Apollo with his arrowy store:
Athene fronted Ares, fierce and rude:
And Artemis, loud ranger of the wood,
Gold-shafted, strove with Hera, large-eyed dame:
With queenly Leto countered Hermes shrewd:
And 'gainst Hephæstus that strong river came,
Which men Scamander call, Xanthus its heavenly name.

9

So gods encountered gods, while yearning still
Achilleus pined to plunge into the fight
And track out Hector, with his blood to fill
The war-god's maw, till he were sated quite.
But army-rallying Phœbus did incite
Æneas to defy that chief spear-famed,
And breathed into his breast heroic might :
Like to Lycaon's voice his own he framed,
And thus in borrowed guise a comrade's freedom claimed :

10

"Where now those vaunts, Æneas, ruler sage,
Which drinking with our princes thou didst make,
That with Pelides thou wouldst dare engage?"
Whom answering, thus in turn Æneas spake :
"Why seek'st thou, Priam's son, my will to shake,
Bidding me brave Achilleus the divine ?
'Twere not my first adventure for that stake,
Since heretofore he daunted me and mine,
Even on Ida's slope, a-harrying of our kine.

11

"Two cities then he sacked in our poor land :
But, nerved by Zeus, my knees did nimbly play ;
Else had I fallen by his and Pallas' hand ;
For on his path she shed a light like day,
And sharpened his keen spear, our tribes to slay.
Wherefore may no man with Achilleus fight,
For still some god destruction wards away
From his charmed life : while all his darts aright
Fly, nor remit their force till through the flesh they bite.

12

"Would Heaven deal fair, not lightly should he then
O'ercome me, though his frame were brass, not clay."
And the great Archer-king thus spoke again :
"Thou too, brave warrior, to the immortals pray :
For Aphrodite gave thee birth, men say ;
He to a meaner power his breath doth owe ;
That child of Zeus, this of the sea-god grey :
Charge him with stubborn steel, nor let thy foe
Appal thee with sharp words and valour's outward show."

13

So saying, into his heart he breathed great might :
Forth went the chief, full armed, with nodding crest :
Yet scaped he not the white-armed Hera's sight
As 'gainst Pelides through the crowd he pressed.
The friendly gods she summoned, and addressed :
"Poseidon and Athene, hear and con
The issue of this thing within your breast :
Lo here ! Æneas, armed entire, is gone
To fight with Peleus' seed : Apollo urged him on.

14

"Come, turn we him from his expected goal,
Or let some god to our Pelides fly
And give him store of strength, nor scant his soul,
That he may know the mightiest ones on high
Love him, but weak are those who yet would try
From the doomed Trojans to drive war away.
For therefore have we issued from the sky
That safely he may tread the field to-day :
That past, his birth-fate's doom endure he as he may.

15

"But if no voice assure him, he will fear,
When, fronting him, some god he haps to see;
For gods are grim when plainly they appear."
And great Poseidon answered presently:
"Why, Hera, this wild wrath? it fits not thee.
I would not that the gods should clash in fight,
We and our foes: for far the stronger we.
Now from the path retire we to a height
Where we may sit and watch: leave war to mortal wight.

16

"But if war's god or Phœbus strife begin,
Impede our chief, nor leave his spear to play,
From us too straightway shall upsoar the din
Of terrible fight: and quickly worsted they
Shall back to heaven in helpless disarray,
By our strong hands and stern compulsion tamed."
So saying, the great Earth-shaker led the way
To the mound-rampart of Alcides famed:
Athene and Troy's sons erewhile that bulwark framed,

17

To keep off the sea-beast, what time it swept
From the shore's margin o'er the inland ground.
There with Poseidon these their station kept,
In obscure haze impenetrable enwound.
Opposed the others sat on Simois' mound
Round thee, bright Phœbus, and grim battle's power.
So brooded these and those in thought profound,
Each doubting to begin the deadly stour,
Though Zeus still bade them on, and thundered from his tower.

18

The dense plain swarmed : steel glittered far and wide
On men and horses, and their feet did smite
The sounding earth, while those two warriors tried
Went midway 'twixt the hosts, intent on fight,
Divine Achilleus and Æneas wight.
First marched Æneas forth with threatening look,
Nodding his crest : he held his buckler bright
To guard his bosom, and his lance he shook :
And from the side opposed his way Pelides took.

19

Like lion he, whom men yearn all to slay,
A village roused : scornful he moves at first,
Till, wounded by some dart, he turns to bay
Gasping, and round his jaws the foam-bells burst,
And the heart groans in his stout bosom nursed,
And sides and loins he lashes to and fro
With his swift tail, and stirs up battle's thirst,
Then, glaring, darts right forward, some one foe
To kill, or be himself in the first rank laid low ;

20

E'en thus Achilleus lashed him to the fray :
So when to each the other had come nigh,
Swift-foot divine Achilleus first did say :
" Why com'st thou hither, passing thousands by,
Æneas ? wouldst thou me to fight defy,
Hoping that thou shalt rule the Trojans wight
In Priam's place ? yet e'en if here I die,
Not then will Priam give thee his own right :
Sons has he : and his mind is steadfast, and not light.

21

"Has Troy to thee some fruitful tract assigned,
Rich arable and vineyard, for thine own,
If me thou kill? yet hard the task thou'lt find.
Ere now, I ween, thou from my spear hast flown.
Or mind'st thou not, how from thy kine alone
Down Ida's slope thou fleddest with swift pace
Before me? backward look thou gav'st me none,
But ranst on to Lyrnessus: that fair place
I sacked, by mighty Zeus' and stern Athene's grace.

22

"Its women I led captive for my prey,
While thou wast saved by Zeus and those on high.
Yet deem not they shall save thee thus to-day:
No—get thee to thy comrades, nor defy
My conquering arm, lest evil come thee nigh.
The deed once done, the fool is wise too late."
And answering thus Æneas made reply:
"Hope not with words, Pelides, to amate
My spirit, like some babe's: I too can chide and rate.

23

"Each other's sires by fame we know full well,
Though mine thou hast seen never, nor I thine.
The blameless Peleus was thy sire, men tell,
Thy mother Thetis, daughter of the brine.
My dam was Aphrodite the divine,
And great Anchises my redoubted sire.
And two of these to-day shall wet their eyne
For their lost son: for ne'er shall we retire
Unfoughten, nor fond words suffice to quench our ire.

24

“Yet wouldst thou now of my descent be told
(Oft told the story, and to many known),
Great Zeus gave birth to Dardanus of old,
Who built Dardania : in the plain no stone
Had yet been laid of sacred Ilion,
But still men housed them on the roots of Ide.
And after Erichthonius heired the throne
Of Dardanus : more rich than all beside
Was he, and mares three thousand ranged his pastures wide.

25

“These Boreas saw and loved them as they grazed :
A horse’s form he took with blue-black mane,
And twelve fair colts from his embrace were raised ;
And whiles they darted o’er the foodful plain,
Nor crushed one stalk of all the tapering grain ;
And whiles o’er ocean’s surface they did run,
Skimming the breakers, nor their feet had stain.
But Trojan Tros was Erichthonius’ son,
And children three were his, unblemished every one,

26

“Ilus, Assaracus, and Ganymede,
Fairest of men the last, whom heaven’s bright crew
Caught up from earth, all for his beauty’s meed :
From Ilus’ loins Laomedon upgrew,
Who gat Tithonus, Priam, Lampus too,
Clytius, and Hiketaon, prince of might :
But from Assaracus great Capys drew
His birth : from him Anchises sprang to light :
Anchises begat me, and Priam Hector wight.

27

“Such is the lineage, such the blood I boast :
But Zeus doth make man’s prowess small or great,
E’en as he pleaseth : for his strength is most.
But come, forbear we now this childish prate,
Thus talking as we stand in war’s debate.
For taunts in plenty each can fling, I trow :
A goodly vessel they might soon o’erweight.
Man’s tongue wags lightly, and his words outflow
Full swift : and wide their range to move in to and fro.

28

“Whate’er thou speakest, thou shalt hear as good.
But why must we needs wrangle ? ’tis not meet
To stand and scold, like women in hot blood,
Who for some quarrel that their hearts doth eat,
Standing and scolding midway in the street,
Deal out, as anger prompts them, truth or lie.
No words of thine shall quench my warlike heat
Till with sharp steel we combat : let us try
What each to each can do by spearcraft, thou and I.”

29

So spake he, and his forceful javelin drave
At the dread shield, framed by Hephæstus’ art.
Loud thundered the great shield : afraid, though brave,
Pelides held it from his frame apart :
For sure he deemed Æneas’ mighty dart,
Launched from that arm, with ease would onward go,
Fond man ! nor knew he in his mind and heart
That those all-glorious gifts the gods bestow
Not lightly shrink or yield at touch of human blow.

30

So the great shield Æneas' javelin fierce
Brake not ; for by the gold, heaven's gift, 'twas stayed :
Two folds it pierced, but three were yet to pierce :
For with five folds its disk the god o'erlaid ;
Two brazen, inner twain of tin were made,
The midmost gold ; 'twas there that pause it found.
Then his strong spear, that cast a lengthening shade,
Pelides sent, and smote the buckler round
Under the outmost rim wherewith the marge was bound.

31

Thinnest was there the brass, and thinnest far
The bullock's hide ; there went the javelin through,
The Pelian ash-beam, and the shield did jar.
Æneas shrank and from the stroke withdrew,
Shifting his buckler : o'er his shoulder flew
The lance, and fixed in earth : dissevered sheer
Were the shield's plates : he, suffered to eschew
The mighty dart, stood shuddering, while his fear
Brought grief into his eyes, to see it lodged so near.

32

Then rushed Achilleus on with terrible cry,
His sharp sword drawn : Æneas seized a stone,
Enormous weight, which not two men could ply,
As men are now : he swayed it lightly alone.
So had he at his foe that huge mass thrown,
Smiting the helmet or the shield of fence,
And his own life beneath the sword had flown,
But that Poseidon marked it with quick sense,
And, turning to the gods, bespoke their audience :

33

" Ah wellaway ! in truth my heart is woe
For mighty-souled Æneas, who full straight,
Slain by Achilleus' hand, shall pass below.
Apollo's suasion lured him to death's gate,
Fond wretch, nor shall his patron's power abate
The edge of doom : yet wherefore should he dree
Unmerited sorrow, our revenge to sate
For other's guilt, while generous still and free
His offerings to us gods, who in Olympus be ?

34

" But come we now and his deliverance shape,
For fear that Zeus be wrathful for his case,
If thus he fall : for 'tis his fate to scape,
Lest that the stock be rooted from earth's face
Of Dardanus, first in Kronion's grace
Of all his sons that did from women spring.
For long hath he borne hate to Priam's race :
Yet shall Æneas be the Trojans' king,
Himself and his sons' sons, whomso the years may bring."

35

And large-eyed queenly Hera answer gave :
" Earth-shaker, with thyself take thought, and say
If that divine Æneas thou wilt save,
Or leave him, although good, his enemy's prey.
For many an oath we on our souls did lay,
I and Athene, 'mid the heavenly quire,
Ne'er from the Trojans to avert death's day,
Not e'en when Ilion in devouring fire
Shall burn, and of their foes the Achaians have desire."

36

But when the strong Earth-shaker heard that speech,
Through battle and the noise of spears he flew
And came where the chiefs stood, each fronting each.
Around Achilles' eyes a mist he threw,
Making them darkle, and with speed outdrew
The Pelian javelin, tipped with brass, that tare
Æneas' shield, and laid it, hid from view,
At its lord's feet: then sprang aloft in air,
Holding on high Æneas, and from earth upbare.

37

O'er many a rank of steeds and heroes wight
Bounded Æneas in that mighty spring,
Till at the verge of battle he did light,
Where Caucon tribes the war were marshalling.
Then to his side came up Poseidon king,
And spake in wingèd words for him to hear:
"What god, Æneas, did so fond a thing,
Bidding thee 'gainst Achilles lift thy spear,
At once thy better far and to the gods more dear?

38

"Oft as thou seest him, mind thee of retreat,
Lest, spite of fate, into death's house thou go.
But when that he his destined end shall meet,
Take heart, and 'mid the foremost strike thy blow,
For other Argive none shall lay thee low."
With that he left him, having all enjoined,
And straight unveiled the sight of his great foe,
Who looked full out from eyes no longer blind,
And thus in anger spoke to his own mighty mind:

39

"Gods! a great marvel I behold to-day:
Here on the field my good ash-spear doth lie,
Nor see I him I meant therewith to slay.
Ay, they did love him then, the powers on high:
I deemed his talk but empty braggartry.
Well, let him go: just scaped from the dark land,
My arm, I judge, he will not soon defy.
Come, let me hearten our stout Danaan band,
And of Troy's other sons make trial, hand to hand."

40

Then, leaping 'mid the ranks, to each he cried:
"Stand not apart, brave men, but onward go:
Hard were the task for me, though warrior tried,
To fight a host, and deal with every foe.
Ares nor Pallas, though a god, I trow,
Could manage all this fray: thews, hands, and feet,
If these can profit, mine shall not be slow:
Now through their ranks I go straight on, nor sweet
Meseems, will be his rest, whoso my spear shall meet."

41

So his men cheered he: Hector to his own
Cried loud, and swore Pelides' arm to stay:
"Bold sons of Troy, fear not that threatening tone:
With words e'en I would match the gods in fray;
Not so with spear, for far the stronger they.
Not all his words Achilles will fulfil:
Some he will perfect, some cut short midway.
Though fire his hands be, I will meet him still,
Ay, though his hands be fire, like steel his power to kill."

42

So he: with lifted spears they marched each man ;
When thus in Hector's ear Apollo spoke :
"Defy not thus Achilleus in the van,
But bide without the tumult 'mid thy folk,
Lest thou be hurt with spear or falchion-stroke."
He said : and Hector 'mid the throng withdrew,
Fearing the god's voice on his ear that broke :
While fiercely Achilleus on the Trojans flew,
Shouting a terrible shout, and first Iphition slew.

43

That chief a Naiad to Otrynteus bore,
Where thick on Tmolus lies the wintry flake :
Achilleus smote him, rushing in the fore,
Full on the head : the skull in sunder brake :
Clanging he fell, and the proud conqueror spake :
"Dead art thou, Otryntides, fiercest foe :
Here is thy death : thy birth was by the lake
Of Gyges, where thy father's lands lie low,
By fishy Hyllus' wave and Hermus' eddying flow."

44

So vaunted he: the other's eyes grew dim :
O'er the fallen corpse the Achaian horses flew,
And with their wheel-tires sundered limb from limb :
Next him the insulting foe Demoleon slew,
Antenor's son, a champion brave and true,
Piercing the temple through the helmet's plate :
Nor stayed the brass the stroke, but issuing through
The javelin brake the bone : the warm brain straight
Was spattered o'er the skull : so did his force abate.

45

Then, as Hippodamas from the chariot sprang,
He pierced his flying back; who tumbled prone,
Gasping and bellowing in the keen death-pang,
As dragged around the lord of Helicon
Bellows a bull; Poseidon loves that groan;
So groaned he: *he* with spear intent to cast
Gave chase to Polydore, king Priam's son,
Whom his sire fain had kept from war, for last
And best-beloved was he, and all in speed surpassed.

46

He in his folly, showing his swift feet,
Ran through the foremost, till his day was set:
For, as he passed, Achilleus' javelin fleet
Pierced his mid chine, e'en where the buckler met
Clasping the belt, enchased with golden fret,
And girt the breastplate with a double fold:
The spear went through the navel without let:
Down sank he kneeling: dimness heavy and cold
Covered him round: he grasped his entrails as he rolled.

47

But soon as Hector marked young Polydore,
Holding his entrails, writhing on the plain,
A mist came o'er his eyeballs, and no more
He kept at distance, but strode forth amain,
Shaking his lance, like fire: Achilleus fain
Leapt as he saw, and spoke in proud despite:
"Near is the man who rent my heart in twain,
Slaying my comrade: it shall end ere night,
This skulking each from each along the walks of fight."

48

Then with a frown brave Hector he addressed :
" Approach, that quickly thou mayst pass death's gate."
And Hector answered, with undaunted breast :
" Hope not with words, Pelides, to amate
Me, like some babe : I too can chide and rate.
Stronger art thou, I weaker far, I know.
Howbeit on the gods' knees lies either's fate,
If, though thy weaker, by my lance's blow
I slay thee : for my lance, like thine, makes blood to flow."

49

Speaking, he shook his spear, and onward sent :
Athenè turned it from her champion proud
With light-breathed air : to Hector back it went
And fell before his feet : the foe stern-browed
Rushed on in fury, shouting fierce and loud,
Hot for his blood : but Phœbus came to save
His favourite chief, and covered him with cloud.
Three times with lance in hand Achilleus drave
Full at his enemy's breast ; three times the cloud he clave.

50

When the fourth time he charged, a god to see,
Fierce words came lightening from his lips of gloom :
" Once more from death, base cur, 'tis thine to flee,
Though it was nigh thee sure : but from thy doom
Phœbus Apollo saved thee, he to whom,
Going 'mid javelins' din, thou needs must pray.
Yet shall I meet and send thee to the tomb,
If I too have some god for help and stay :
Now at Troy's other sons I drive, catch whom I may."

51

This said, through Dryops' neck the lancè he thrust :
Down at his feet the stricken foe did crash,
Whom there he left, to wallow in the dust ;
Then stayed Demuchus, tall as mountain-ash,
Piercing his knee : forthwith the falchion's gash
His life bereaved : Laogonus renowned
And brother Dardanus with onward dash
From their scared steeds he tumbled to the ground,
Slain by the sword-cut that, this by the javelin's wound.

52

Then Tros, Alastor's son, he sent below,
Who clasped his knee, before him falling prone,
And bade him spare and scatheless let him go,
In pity for young years that matched his own :
Fond wretch ! his foeman's heart he had not known ;
For nought was there of balm or honey-dew,
But pitiless fury, burning to the bone :
E'en while he clutched his knees, intent to sue,
Down came the thundering blade, and pierced his liver through.

53

Out fell the liver, and the black blood thence
Ran, and his lap did deluge : darkness drear
Covered his eyes, bereaving soul and sense :
Then smote the victor Mulius, standing near,
And pushed the lance-head through from ear to ear :
Next full on the head's crown his falchion bright
Echeclus struck, Agenor's offspring dear :
The steel was warmed with bloodshed : on his sight
Fate and empurpled death laid hands of tyrannous might.

54

Next fell Deucalion: where the nerves are strung
About the elbow, through his arm was sent
The brazen point: he stood with arm loose-hung,
Foreseeing death: his neck the falchion rent,
Far whirling helm and head: the marrow sprent
Leapt from the spine: on earth he tumbled slain.
Then after Peireus' son the conqueror went,
Rhigmus, who came from Thracia's deep-soiled plain,
And speared him 'neath the waist: the belly felt the bane.

55

He from the car fell ruining: the fierce foe
At Areïthous' shoulder pushed his blade,
As his lord's steeds he turned, and forced him so
Down from the seat: the steeds were all derayed.
Look how a great fire raves through the deep glade
Of a dry mountain, kindling all the wood,
And the blaze tosses, by the wild wind swayed:
So like a god Achilleus unsubdued [blood.
Dealt death to his doomed foes, and earth ran black with

56

As when a man doth broad-browed bullocks join,
To tread white barley on the rounded floor,
Soon 'neath their feet the grain is threshed out fine,
So at Achilleus' beck the horses tore,
Trampling on shields and bodies: spattering gore
Befouled the axle and the chariot's rim,
As hoof and felly their red rain did pour:
Still drove Pelides: his great hands were grim
With sweat, and blood, and dust: for fame was all to him.

BOOK XXI.

1

BUT when they reached the bank of that fair flood,
Xanthus the gulfy, of Zeus born and bred,
In twain he sundered whom he erst pursued ;
Plainward and townward half were scattered,
The way whereby yestreen the Achaians fled,
When Hector's rage the surging war controlled :
There poured they all amated : Hera spread
A wall of mist before : half wildly shoaled
Into the deep-mouthed stream that bright with silver rolled.

2

With a great crash they fell : the current steep
Roared, and the banks re-echoed : loud they cried,
Swimming and floundering in the gulfy deep.
As locusts scared from where they wont to bide
Rise on the wing and seek the river-side,
When sudden flames flare up where all was stilled,
And tremblingly they flutter to the tide,
So the loud waves of Xanthus silver-rilled
Under Achilleus' spear with steeds and men were filled.

3

But the dread hero left his spear behind,
Propped on the bank with tamarisks overgrown,
Then like a god plunged in, with evil mind
To his scared foes, armed with his sword alone :
He swept it round and round : a piteous groan
Rose from the dying, and the stream ran blood.
As in the harbour's crannies, all as one,
From the great dolphin hide the scaly brood
In fear ; for whom he takes, he swallows for his food ;

4

So did the huddling Trojans cower and shrink
Beneath the bank : he, when his hands grew slack,
Twelve youths alive snatched from the river's brink,
To glut his vengeance for Patroclus' wrack :
He haled them forth like fawns, a trembling pack,
And did their hands with twisted thongs belay,
Which their own robes supplied, behind their back,
And to his comrades gave to lead away
Shipward : then yet again he plunged, intent to slay.

5

'Twas there Lycaon, Priam's son, he found,
Whom on a midnight raid he erst had caught
Hewing fig branches in his father's ground,
As rims for a war-chariot : ere he thought,
Down came the foe, and sudden mischief brought,
On shipboard took the trembling thrall, and sold
To Lemnos : him the son of Jason bought :
Thence his sire's friend redeemed him with much gold,
Ætion, and sent off to fair Arisbe's hold.

6

Thence flying, came he back to his own land.
Eleven short days he with his kin did bide :
The twelfth Heaven gave him to Achilleus' hand,
Which needs must hurl him to the Stygian tide
Despite his will : him when Achilleus spied
Stripped of lance, helmet, buckler, which array
He had flung off, for sore his strength was tried,
Scaping the river, and his knees gave way,
Thus to his own great heart in anger he did say :

7

" Gods ! a great wonder this mine eyes behold.
Now surely Troy's brave sons whom I did slay
Will rise up from beneath the darkness cold,
E'en as this youth hath scaped the evil day,
Whom I to Lemnos sold : nor him did stay
The sea, which many unwilling doth detain.
Come, he shall taste my spear, that know I may
Whether thence too he scape, or earth's rich plain
Hold him, whose iron grasp doth e'en the strong restrain."

8

So brooded he : the trembling youth came near,
To touch him, for sore yearned he death to flee.
E'en as Achilleus lifted his long spear
In act to strike, beneath its shade ran he
And clasped his knees : the javelin in the lea
Stood rooted, thirsting yet to make blood flow.
So with one hand the youth embraced his knee ;
The other grasped the javelin, nor let go ;
And with winged words he spoke in supppliance to his foe :

9

"I clasp thy knees, Achilleus! have respect
And pity me, great chief of godlike strain!
Thy suppliant I, whom thou must needs protect.
With thee I tasted first Demeter's grain
The day thou took'st me in my sire's domain
And sold'st to Lemnos, of my friends forlorn:
A hundred oxen's price was then thy gain:
Thence threefold ransom loosed me: this twelfth morn
Sees me returned to Troy, after much suffering borne.

10

"Zeus hates me sure, or ne'er had ruthless Fate
Given me to thee, a second time thy prey.
In truth my mother bore me brief of date,
Laothoë, the fair child of Altes grey,
Altes, whom warlike Leleges obey,
Who in steep Pedasus doth hold his reign:
His daughter Priam took in evil day
To share his bed with others: brethren twain
Sprang from their dear embrace, and both must now be slain.

11

"One of these twain doth lie already low
In van of battle, Polydore divine,
Writhing and cowering 'neath thy javelin's blow:
Now in this spot like evil shall be mine,
For hope is none to scape those hands of thine,
Since Fate hath driven me here, to meet my doom.
Yet I will speak, thy purpose to incline:
Spare me: I sprang not from one mother's womb
With Hector, who sent down thy gentle friend to gloom."

12

Thus with pale lips the son of Priam spake,
Suppliant: but to his words came harsh reply:
“Poor fool! no talk of gain or ransom make:
Perchance or ere Patroclus came to die
I felt for Troy some touch of clemency,
And many took and sold to distant coast:
But now there lives not who from death shall fly,
Whom Heaven gives to my hands of Troy’s whole host:
No, they shall perish all, and Priam’s sons the most.

13

“Die thou too, friend: why make such moan to die?
Patroclus, far thy better, he too died.
Seest thou how strong and beautiful am I,
My father among men a name of pride,
A god my mother, and to gods allied?
Yet Fate and death sit heavy on my head,
Be it at morn, or noon, or eventide,
When me, e’en me, some warrior shall lay dead,
By spear-throw from the hand, or shaft from bowstring sped.”

14

He spoke: that other’s force did melt like dew:
The spear he quitted, and with hands outspread
Sat down: Achilleus his keen falchion drew
And smote the neck ’twixt collar-bone and head,
And the whole sword within him buried.
Prostrate on earth he lay, and from the rent
The blood ran out, and dyed the ground with red.
The conqueror caught him by the foot, and sent
His carcass down the stream, while scorn in words found vent:

15

"There lie thou with the fishes : they shall lick
From thy new-welling wound the gouts of blood,
Ungently : nor thy mother, though heart-sick,
Shall wail thee, laid on couch of costly wood,
But swift Scamander with his eddying flood
Shall wash thee down, the sea's embrace to meet.
And on the wave some fish, in search for food,
Through the black ripple shall dart up, to eat
Lycaon's goodly fat, so dainty-white and sweet.

16

"On with you to destruction, all, all, all,
Ye flying, I behind you slaughtering still,
E'en till we come to Ilion's god-built wall :
Nor aught shall your bright-eddying river skill
To help you, nor the many bulls ye kill,
The steeds ye plunge alive into his tide :
But miserably each man shall fall, until
Ye quit Patroclus' blood and theirs who died
By the swift ships, the while I laid my spear aside."

17

So he : the River waxed more wrothful still,
Deep pondering how from battle he should stay
Achilleus, and from Troia ward off ill.
Then Peleus' son, holding his lance in sway,
Leapt on Asteropæus, keen to slay.
From royal Pelegon that chief was bred :
But Pelegon from Axius sprang to day,
To Axius born in Peribœa's bed,
King Accessamenus' child : for her that River wed.

18

On rushed Achilleus : from the river wave
Came the bold warrior, and against him stood,
Holding two spears ; for Xanthus made him brave
To face the foe, in wrath for their young blood
Whom fierce Achilleus slaughtered at the flood.
So when the twain each other were come nigh,
First spoke Pelides in disdainful mood :
" Who, whence art thou that dar'st to meet mine eye ?
Sure theirs are unblest fathers who this arm defy."

19

And Pelegon's bold offspring spake again :
" Why ask'st thou, brave Pelides, of my race ?
I come from far Pæonia, in my train
A host of long-speared Pæons : ten days' space
Is past, since first I came unto this place.
From broad-streamed Axius sprang my line to day,
Axius, the goodliest river on earth's face,
Who Pelegon begat : his son, men say,
Am I : so, doughty chief, now fight we as we may."

20

Threatening he spake : the spear of ashen tree
Achilleus raised : Asteropæus threw
A brace of darts, for two right hands had he :
At once each javelin to its quarry flew :
One smote the shield, but might not pierce it through,
For the bright gold, heaven's bounty, checked its speed :
One glanced on the right elbow, and forth drew
A spirt of dark-hued blood : then in the mead,
O'er-passing, it stood firm, hungering on flesh to feed.

21

Achilleus next his forthright-flying dart
Hurled at Asteropæus, hot to slay :
But from the enemy's frame it swerved apart,
So struck the lofty bank, and lodged mid-way
The stark strong ash-beam in the mounded clay.
Then, drawing his keen sword, with mighty shout
Forth sprang Pelides headlong on his prey,
Who, wrenching with his hand so large and stout,
Yet skilled not from the ridge to pluck the javelin out.

22

Thrice tugged he at the weapon and did shake,
Thrice let it go ; the fourth time he was fain
The Pelian ash perforce to bend and break ;
But by Achilleus' sword he tumbled slain,
Which smote him on the navel : to the plain
From the gashed belly were the bowels shed :
Gloom veiled his eyes : he gasped in the death-pain :
While on the breast Achilleus fixed his tread,
And stripped him of his arms, and words of vaunting said :

23

" Lie there ! 'tis hard with sons of Zeus to strive
For other wights, albeit of Rivers' breed.
Thou from a River dost thy birth derive,
But I am mighty Zeus' authentic seed.
Peleus Æacides, who yet doth lead
The Myrmidonian folk, gave birth to me :
From Zeus' own loins did Æacus proceed :
And Zeus, more strong than River-kind is he,
And stronger are Zeus' sons than sons of Rivers be.

24

“Thou hast beside thee now a River of might,
Could he but aid thee: but with Zeus most high
No prowess under heaven may dare to fight:
With whom not Achelous’ self can vie,
Nor deep-waved Ocean’s sovereign potency,
He from whom seas and rivers all are fed,
Fountains and wells: yet may he not defy
Kronion’s arm, but doth his lightning dread
And thunder-peals, when as they rumble overhead.”

25

He spoke, and wrenched his javelin from the mound:
There in the sand he left the soulless clay
E’en as it fell: the black wave lapped it round;
And eels and fishes flocked about their prey,
Nibbling the rich fat from the reins away:
Himself the while to chase the Pæons went,
Who by the river shoaled in disarray,
Seeing the chief that led their armament
By fierce Pelides’ sword in bloody combat shent.

26

Thersilochus and Mydon there he killed,
Mnesus, Astypylus, and Thrasius wight,
Ænius, and Ophelestes; and had spilled
Yet other Pæon lives in that dread fight,
But like a man appearing to the sight
The angry River spoke from out his tide:
“More than a man’s, Achilles, is thy might,
And more than mortal are thy deeds of pride,
For the great powers of heaven still war upon thy side.

27

"If Zeus have given thee all Troy's sons to kill,
First drive them from my banks upon the plain,
Then work thy pleasure: for the corpses fill
My pleasant streams, nor can I to the main
Roll forth my current, cumbered thus with slain:
And thou, brave chief, art slaughtering without rest.
Come, check thy hand, and let me breathe again."
Whom answering thus the swift-foot chief addressed:
"So be it, godlike Xanthus, as it likes thee best.

28

"Yet from Troy's slaughter cease I not, until
I drive them to their walls, and put to test
If I kill Hector or me Hector kill."
Then like a god upon the rout he pressed,
While the vexed River Phœbus' ear addressed:
"Strong Archer, child of Zeus, ill dost thou keep
Thy sire Kronion's oft-renewed behest,
To stand and succour Troy, till eve shall sweep
Her shade on the rich lands, and lay mankind to sleep."

29

So he: but from the bank Achilles leapt
In the mid-stream: on rushed the River amain,
Rousing his waves in dire turmoil, and swept
The weltering burden of the Trojan slain,
With bellowing like a bullock's, to the plain,
While safe he held the living in his flood,
By steepy wall of waters kept from bane:
Fierce round Achilles the chafed torrent stood,
And beat upon his shield: nor held his treading good.

30

Then a tall elm, parent of thickest shade,
He clutched : it fell, down tearing the bank's side
E'en with its roots, and the bright water stayed
With branching boughs, and bridged the channel wide,
Fallen all within : forth sprang he from the tide,
And with fleet foot sped o'er the plain away,
Fearing : nor yet the god was pacified,
But rushed on him dark-crested, bent to stay
Achilleus, and from Troy ward off the evil day.

31

Off sprang Pelides, far as a spear's cast,
In speed like the black eagle, fowl of prey
(Of all the birds none stronger or more fast) ;
So darted he, while terribly did bray
The brass upon his breast : swerving away
He fled : the god pursued with deafening roar.
E'en as a man from fountain of dark spray
Doth guide a stream along his orchard-floor,
And, delving, from the trench throws out the earth before ;

32

As it flows forth, the pebbles every one
Chafe under it ; so glides it down the hill
Gurgling, and e'en its leader doth outrun ;
Thus on Achilleus' steps the black-swoln rill
Pressed ever : Gods than men are mightier still.
And often as essayed that warrior fleet
To stand at bay, indomitable of will,
And know if Heaven be leagued for his defeat,
So oft the great flood came and on his shoulders beat.

33

Still he sprang upward : but his knees were bowed
By the strong stream, which took the ground away :
Then, looking up to heaven, he groaned aloud :
“ Zeus, sire, will never a god bring help to-day
And save me now ? then fall I as I may.
Of all the immortals none hath harmed me so
As my fond glozing mother, who did say
Here 'neath the bulwark of our Trojan foe
My end should be to die, struck by Apollo's bow.

34

“ Had I by Hector fallen, their noblest here,
Then brave had been the slayer and brave the slain :
Now must I die by bitter fate and drear,
Cooped in a river, as some swine-tending swain
Whom the stream drowns, a-crossing after rain.”
He spoke : eftsoon Poseidon at his side
With Pallas stood : like men appeared the twain,
And clasping hands, their promise ratified ;
And the Earth-shaker first in soothing accents cried :

35

“ Fear not, nor quail, Pelides ! here are we,
Pallas and I, come down by Zeus' consent :
Fate wills not that a River vanquish thee :
Soon shalt thou see him cease o'ertoiled and spent :
Now hear our words, and be thine ears attent :
Let not thy hands from equal fight refrain
Till Ilion's sons within their walls be pent,
Whoe'er may scape : then, having Hector slain,
Back get thee to the ships : we will thee fame to gain.”

36

This said, they parted: he along the plain
Fled: with spilt water all was flooded o'er,
And corpses many and harness of the slain
Were floating: his knees sprang as on he bore
Against the stream: nor the broad torrent's roar
Delayed him aught, for Pallas strength supplied:
Yet rested not Scamander, but the more
Chafed at Pelides, and swelled high his tide,
Surging in a great heap, and loud to Simois cried:

37

"Dear brother, give we pause to this man's might,
Or at his rush the towers of Priam king
Will fall, nor Troy resist the shock of fight.
Haste to the rescue, and thy succours bring;
Fill thy strong streams with water from each spring,
Rouse all thy depths, build up the towering wave,
And trunks and stones in hideous tumult fling;
So make we to surcease this champion brave,
Who now o'ermasters all, and like a god doth rave.

38

"Nought shall his force or goodly form bestead,
Nor those bright arms, which far below shall sleep
Down in the depth, in moist clay buried:
And I will whelm himself in sandhills deep,
And infinite shingle o'er him mound and heap,
That of his corpse none gather e'er a bone;
Such store of mud above him will I sweep,
To serve him for a tomb: nor funeral stone
Shall lack him in that day when Argos makes her moan."

39

Ardent he spake, and with infuriate roar
Burst on Achilleus, maddening in his pride,
Seething with foam, and dead men's limbs, and gore.
All purpling up, the steep surge of the tide
Stood topplingly, and poured from every side
On Peleus' son: then, stung with dreadful fear
For that dear life, queen Hera loudly cried,
Lest the deep-eddying River overwhelm him sheer,
And thus bespake Hephæstus, her own offspring dear:

40

"Up, Limper, my good son! for sure we deem
Swift-eddying Xanthus is thy peer in fight.
Now hasten to bring succour, and make beam
Along his banks a blaze of scorching light.
Myself the while will a great storm excite,
West wind and south arousing from the seas:
So shall that flame devour the Trojans wight,
Them and their armour: thou before the breeze
Send fire on Xanthus' self, and burn his fringing trees.

41

"Nor let him turn thee from thine end away
By gentle words or haughty threatening air;
But let thy fury revel without stay,
Till when thou hear'st my shout command thee spare,
Then, nor till then, thy tameless fire forbear."
She spoke: Hephæstus shot his fires amain:
First on the field they burst, consuming there
Those ghastly heaps, late by Achilleus slain:
And straitened was the flood, and parched the spacious plain.

42

As winds of autumn some fresh-watered plot
Swift dry, and whoso tends it joys to view,
So the whole plain at once grew parched and hot,
And the dead burned who did the ground bestrew :
Then on the River the bright blaze he threw ;
Scorched were the shrubs and trees, or low or tall,
That on the marge of those sweet waters grew ;
Willow, and elm, and tamarisk withered all,
And lotus, and dank reed, and slender galingal.

43

Writhed too the eels and fish that wont to play
Hither and thither 'neath the watery floor,
Galled by the hand that heavy on them lay :
And the strong River smarted at the core
With fiery pangs, and thus did peace implore :
“ Hephæstus, ne'er a god can counter thee :
Those furious flames, I may not face them more :
Cease : let Troy's host before Achilleus flee,
I care not : strive who will, or back his friends, for me.”

44

Parching he spake : simmered his waves divine.
As boils a caldron in the fire's fierce glow,
Charged with the brawn of some well-nurtured swine,
All bubbling up, when sticks are laid below,
So burned the River, his waters bubbled so :
Nor forward might he run, but still was stayed,
And the hot scorching vapour wrought him woe,
By fell Hephæstus' cunning : so he prayed
To Hera's sovereign power, and meek petition made :

45

“Why doth thy son, queen Hera, choose me out
For vengeance from the rest? less guilty I
Than all our train that help the Trojan rout.
Lo here, I cease, nor thy great power defy:
Let him too cease, and lay his anger by.
And to confirm my word, an oath I swear,
I will not save the Trojans from to die,
No, not when Troy is blazing everywhere,
And the Argives light up all with red funereal glare.”

46

But when on Hera's ear those accents fell,
Forthwith her son Hephæstus she bespake:
“Hephæstus, hold, my child: it is not well
To scourge the immortal for the mortal's sake.”
She spoke: Hephæstus his fierce flame did slake,
And, gliding as of old, the reflux flood
Ran in fair streams: so, when Hephæstus brake
The might of Xanthus, they had rest from feud,
For Hera held them back, though angry yet her mood.

47

But on the other gods a furious heat
Fell, and their jarring souls did shift and veer:
Clashing they met: earth groaned beneath their feet,
And heaven sent forth its clarion: Zeus gave ear,
Throned on Olympus, and his heart did cheer,
Laughing to see the gods in conflict met.
No more they stood apart: with brazen spear
Ares, shield-piercer, on Athene set
The foremost, and his gall with bitter words did whet:

48

“Why now, curst gadfly, mak'st thou gods to strive?
Stout is thy stomach that thus yearns for fight.
Remember'st not how Diomed thou didst drive
To wound me? nay, thyself didst guide aright
The shining spear through my fair flesh to bite.
Now shalt thou pay for those thy deeds of shame.”
Then on her tasseled Ægis did he smite,
Whose force not Zeus' own levin-bolt can tame:
There drove the blood-stained god his javelin with sure aim.

49

Backward the goddess stept, and from the ground
Took up a boulder, rugged, huge, and black,
Which men aforetime set the field to bound,
And hurled at Ares' neck: his limbs grew slack:
Seven roods he stretched: the harness at his back
Clashed, and his locks were sullied: at the sight
Laughed Pallas, and with words made fresh attack:
“Fool, know'st thou not e'en now, how far my might
Transcends thine own, that thus thou dar'st me to the fight?”

50

“Take thou thy meed, and suffering here repay
Thy mother's wrongs, and sate her curses dread;
For sure she hates thee, that thou didst betray
Achaia's sons, and haughty Troy bestead.”
So saying, away she turned her stately head:
Him Aphrodite raised, and by her side
Led groaning: for his breath was wellnigh fled.
Whom when the white-armed goddess, Hera, spied,
To stern Athene thus in wingèd words she cried:

51

"Daughter of Zeus, unwearied in thy wrath,
See there, yon flesh-fly doth her Ares lead
From out the war: but follow on their path."
So spoke she; and Athene gave glad heed:
Quick chasing Aphrodite, hot with speed,
With her strong hand she smote her on the breast:
Prostrate she fell, faint-hearted and loose-kneed,
And so together the boon earth they pressed:
Whom Pallas, as they lay, thus mocked with bitter jest:

52

"Such be they all who Troy with succour ply,
What time they counter with the Achaians wight,
Valiant and steadfast as this fair ally
Of Ares, when she countered with my might:
So had we long ago had pause from fight,
Our vengeance wreaked on Ilion's well-built tower."
Then smiled queen Hera with the arms of white.
But he who shakes the earth with his great power
Spake to Apollo thus, or ere they joined in stour:

53

"Phœbus, why stand we several? 'tis not meet,
When others have begun: the thought were base
If, without battle joined, we make retreat
Back to Kronion's brass-floored dwelling-place.
Strike first: for thou art born of younger race:
It fits not me, the elder and more wise.
Insensate! mind'st thou not the foul disgrace
We twain endured at Ilion, from the skies
Descending, we alone, to servile ministries?

54

"To proud Laomedon a year in thrall
We slaved for hire: he did our tasks assign:
To build around Troy town a fair wide wall
Proof against all assault, that work was mine:
Thou featly fedst the creeping crook-horned kine
In woody Ida's gorges day by day.
But when at length the joyous Hours divine
Brought slavery's end, he robbed us of our pay,
Laomedon, the fierce king, and sent with threats away.

55

"Thee did he threat to distant isles to ship
And sell, thy feet and hands behind thee tied,
And both our ears with steel he swore to clip.
So back we went, sullen and mortified,
For our lost wages and his faith belied.
His nation wouldst thou succour, nor with me
Seek that Troy's sons may perish in their pride,
Helpless and hopeless, wives and progeny?"
And the far-darting king made answer courteously:

56

"Kingly Earth-shaker, sure thou ne'er wouldst say
That I were wise with thee for men to fight,
Men that like leaves live out their little day,
Eating earth's fruits, and now blaze out with might,
Now pale and dwindle, struck by sudden blight.
Cease we: the battle let the rest prolong."
This said, he turned him, for he deemed not right
Against his father's brother to wax strong.
Whom the fair queen of woods chid with upbraiding tongue:

57

"Fliest thou, Far-darter, and the palm dost yield
Thus to Poseidon, glory cheap and vain?
Poor fool, why bear'st that idle bow in field?
Ne'er let me hear thee vaunting loud again
In the sire's halls, among the immortal train,
That 'gainst Poseidon thou wilt prove thee good."
Thus she: Apollo did from speech refrain;
But the proud wife of Zeus in wrathful mood
Chode with injurious words the lady of the wood:

58

"How dar'st thou, shameless snarler, against me
To stand? not lightly shalt thou give me chase,
Armed with thy bow and quiver though thou be.
What if a lion thou art to woman's race
And whom thou wilt canst slay, by Zeus's grace?
Far safer on the mountains to lay low
Wild beasts, than meet thy betters face to face:
Yet, if thou wilt, make proof of war, and know
How stronger far than thou she thou wouldst have thy foe."

59

So jeering, both her hands she caught the while
In her left hand, and with her right she took
From off her back the quiver, and with a smile
About the ears therewith her rival strook
As round she turned, and out the arrows shook:
Grieving the goddess fled, with tears half blind,
Like dove that from a hawk flies to some nook
For shelter, doomed not yet her death to find:
So fled she all in tears, her quiver left behind.

60

And Argus' slayer did Leto thus accost :
" Leto, I mean not to contend with thee :
Who with Zeus' wives would bandy blows is lost.
Go, freely boast in heaven's bright company
That thou by strength of arm hast vanquished me."
So he : but Leto o'er the arrows bent,
Which in the dust were fallen dispersedly :
These gathered up, after her child she went :
But she to heaven was gone, to Zeus' high firmament.

61

On her sire's knees all weeping sat the maid,
Her bright robe quivering round her : and he pressed
His daughter close, and gently smiling said :
" Tell me, my child, who of heaven's people blest
Hath used thee thus, like evil-doer confest ?"
And answer made the lady of the wood :
" Sire, 'twas thy consort Hera, that fell pest,
Who 'mongst the immortals stirreth strife and feud."
So talked they each with either, and such parle pursued.

62

Meanwhile to Troy his steps Apollo bent,
Fearing lest Argos sack it, spite of fate :
And the other gods to high Olympus went,
These wroth at heart, those mightily elate :
By their dark-clouded Father down they sate,
While, horse and man, Achilleus crushed the foe.
Look how the smoke from some lost city great
Soars skyward, for Heaven's wrath the blast doth blow,
And worketh toil for all, and sends on many woe :

63

So toil and woe to Troy Achilleus bred :
On the high wall stood Priam that same hour,
And spied the warrior out : before him fled
Huddling the Trojan ranks, nor aught of power
Was in them : groaning, the king left the tower,
And 'neath the wall the warders did entreat :
" Spread wide the gates, until from battle stour
Our host be come : Achilleus' furious feet
Are hard upon their heels : there will be death, I weet.

64

" But when within they breathe, thick herded all,
Then close the portals, and forefend attack :
I fear this fiend will spring upon the wall."
So he : and straight they thrust the portals back :
Great light shone forth : Phœbus, to save from wrack
His Trojans, rushed in the front : their faces turned
Townward, they fled, thirst-maddened and dust-black ;
He with his spear close followed : frenzy burned
For ever in his heart, and still for fame he yearned.

65

Then had the foe high-gated Ilion ta'en,
But Phœbus with new strength Agenor plied,
Valiant and blameless, of Antenor's strain.
With generous hope his heart he fortified,
And stood himself, to guard him, at his side,
Stayed on an oak, with mist around him spread.
So when the warrior's eyes Achilleus spied,
He halted, and his thoughts much tumult bred,
And thus in wrathful vein to his stout heart he said :

66

“ Ah me ! if from Achilleus’ face I fly,
As fly the rest, unnerved and disarrayed,
Into his hands I fall, and craven die :
But should I leave them to be chased and frayed
By that fierce chief, and from the rampart’s shade
Flee toward the plain of Ilion, till I get
To Ida’s lawn, and thread the leafy glade,
Then bathing in the stream, when day is set,
Make back my way to Troy, refreshed from toil and sweat—

67

“ But wherefore doth my heart such things arede ?
’Ware, lest he see me bearing from the wall,
And follow and o’ertake me, winged with speed ;
No scaping then for me from Hades’ thrall ;
For strong is he and mighty beyond all.
But if I face him, and the combat claim—
For surely flesh is his that steel may gall ;
One life he has, men tell me, and his frame
Is mortal-born, albeit Kronion gives him fame.”

68

He ceased, and, rallying, for Achilleus stayed,
While his heart yearned to bring the combat near.
As panther springs from a deep thicket’s shade
To meet the hunter, and her heart no fear
Nor terror knows, though barking loud she hear :
For though with weapon’s thrust or javelin’s throw
He wound her first, yet e’en about the spear
Writhing, her valour doth she not forego,
Till for offence she close, or in the shock lie low :

69

E'en thus the offspring of Antenor sage,
Valiant Agenor, scorned to quit the field
Till with Achilleus he should first engage.
Before him he held forth his rounded shield
And aimed his dart, while loud his menace pealed :
" So, great Achilleus, hope was in thy mind
The valiant Trojans' town this day should yield
To thy fierce onset : dreamer fond and blind !
Great woe that city yet shall breed to Argive kind

70

" For many and brave men therein are we,
Who, shielding parents, wives, and children dear,
Will rescue Troy : but thou, though bold thou be
And terrible in war, shalt perish here."
He spake, and with strong hand dismissed his spear,
Which on the shin-bone struck, directed well :
The new-made greave harsh music to the ear
Uttered : and from the tin the javelin fell,
Nor pierced it : Heaven's own gift did the sharp stroke repel.

71

Then rushed Pelides at Agenor proud
In turn : whom Phoebus let him not subdue,
But snatched away, and covered with much cloud,
And safely sent from out the warrior crew :
While from the rout Achilleus he withdrew
By guile : for he Agenor's form belied,
And faced him so : he hastened to pursue.
So the god chased he through the champaign wide,
Winding him as he ran by deep Scamander's tide.

72

And still Apollo flattered him with guile,
Giving him hope his speed should win the race:
The Trojan rout went shoaling on the while
Right gladly to the city: the great place
Seethed all and swarmed: none dared to halt a space
Without the wall, and each new-comer greet,
Asking who scaped, who perished in that chase:
But all into the town in wild retreat
Poured headlong, whomso saved his knees and nimble feet.

BOOK XXII.

1

So these, like fawns, within the city frayed,
Were freshened from their sweat by the cool air,
And, drinking at their will, their thirst allayed,
Their bodies propped against the ramparts fair,
While fiercely toward the wall the Achaians bare,
Slinging their shields behind : but ruthless Fate
Held Hector with a spell, and chained him there
In front of Ilion and the Scæan gate :
And, turning, to Achilleus spake Apollo straight :

2

“ Why, Peleus’ son, dost chase with thy swift feet,
Thou mortal, me a god ? nor hast thou spied
My godhead yet, so blind thy frantic heat.
Nought reck’st thou of the Trojans, who now bide
Safe housed within, while thou didst turn aside.
Slay me thou canst not : Fate forbids my fall.”
And Peleus’ son in hot displeasure cried :
“ Ay sooth, thou god most pestilent of all,
Woe hast thou wrought me much, thus turning from the wall.

3

“Hadst thou not done it, ere they reached the town,
Gasping in dust had lain a goodly throng.
Now thou hast made me bare of great renown,
And rescued them, nought fearing meed of wrong.
Sure thou shouldst rue it, if my arm were strong.”
So saying, he townward rushed in high disdain,
As conquering steed, car-harnessed, pours along,
Stretching with long stride easily o’er the plain :
So his swift feet and knees he plied withouten strain.

4

Him first king Priam saw with his old eyes,
As o’er the plain he lightened, dazzling bright,
Like to the star that doth in autumn rise,
Whose radiant beams, pre-eminent to sight,
Shine ’mid their fellow-stars at noon of night :
Orion’s Dog we mortals call its name :
Sign is it of much ill, though clear its light,
And mighty fever brings to man’s poor frame :
So, as he ran, the brass upon his breast did flame.

5

Outcried the old man, and his hands did rear,
Smiting his head, and shrilled a bitter cry,
Entreating his loved son, his Hector dear,
Who, hot with Peleus’ son the fight to try,
Stood by the gate : the old man pleadingly
Prayed with stretched hands, a piteous sight to see :
“Hector, my darling, seek not to defy
That chief unaided, lest thy fate thou dree,
Tamed by Pelides’ arm, since far thy stronger he.

6

“Wretch! would that Heaven but held him dear as I!
Soon should his corpse be dogs’ and vultures’ food,
And this black sorrow from my soul should fly.
For he hath made me of sons many and good
The childless sire, some weltering in their blood,
Some sold away and shipped to distant shore.
E’en now two sons in that scared multitude
I miss, Lycaon and young Polydore,
Whom to my arms Laothoë, queen of women, bore.

7

“If now within the hostile camp they live,
Hereafter heaps of gold and brass good store
To buy them back right gladly will we give,
For treasure manifold did Altes hoar
Give to his child: but if they breathe no more,
Dwellers already in the halls below,
The heart of sire and mother will be sore,
But on Troy’s other folk a briefer woe
Will fall, if thou too die not, slain by our great foe.

8

“But come within, dear child, that thou mayst guard
Troy’s men and maids, nor mighty fame convey
To Peleus’ son, and thine own life be marred:
And pity take on this yet breathing clay,
Thy hapless sire, whom in life’s last decay
Zeus will destroy, after much suffering drained,
Seeing sons slain and daughters dragged away,
And bridal bowers by ribald hands profaned,
And infants in fell strife on floor and threshold brained.

9

"And last by savage dogs shall I be rent
At the door's entry, when with spear or sword
By cut or stab some foe my life has shent,
My watch-dogs, fed with meat from my own board,
Which then shall riot on my blood outpoured,
Till thirst blood-sated into madness grow.
Well is it for the young, who, gashed and gored
By mangling steel, in bloody death lies low,
And goodly is each wound that on his corpse doth show :

10

"But when dogs riot on an old man slain,
Marring the hoary beard and hoary hair,
And with fell teeth his nakedness profane,
Most piteous this of all sad mortals bear."
He said, and with his hands the locks did tear
From his white head, nor Hector's purpose swayed :
While, wailing, his sad mother elsewhere,
Loosing her robe, her breast to view displayed,
And likewise to her son in tearful accents prayed :

11

"Have reverence, Hector, and compassionate
Thy mother ! if her breast e'er soothed thy care,
Bethink thee, child : resist within the gate
This chief, nor in the field his prowess dare.
Ah rashly valiant ! should he slay thee there,
I shall not wail thee, my own blossom sweet,
Stretched on thy couch, nor she, thy consort fair,
But far apart from both at the Argive fleet
The swift devouring dogs thy mangled flesh shall eat."

12

So to their son the twain petition made
With tears and prayers, nor Hector's heart did sway.
Still for the advance of his huge foe he stayed,
As for a man's approach a snake doth stay,
On poison gorged : fierce glaring on his prey,
Round his dark cavern he doth coil and wind :
So Hector, fired with courage, gave not way,
His shield against a jutting tower reclined :
And, angry, thus he spake to his own mighty mind :

13

" Ah me ! if now within our walls I hide,
Polydamas first with taunts will heap my head,
Who bade me to the town the Trojans guide
On that fell night which this new terror bred.
No heed I gave, or better had I sped.
Now, since my rashness hath an army slain,
The Trojans and their long-robed dames I dread,
Lest meaner wight take up the taunting strain :
' So stout our Hector's heart, he hath destroyed our train.'

14

" Thus will they speak : far better 'twere that I,
Ere I return, Achilleus here should slay,
Or 'neath my city's wall with glory die.
But if my bossy shield aside I lay,
And helm, and 'gainst the wall my javelin stay,
And so unarmed with brave Achilleus meet,
And swear to give back Helen, and repay
All that great store, which Paris in his fleet
Bore with him off to Troy, whence rose our quarrel's heat ;

15

"Swear too partition of fresh wealth to make
'Mid Argos' sons, whate'er the town doth hide ;
Then of the Trojans firm assurance take
That they will keep back nought, but all divide,
What wealth soe'er in these fair walls may bide—
But wherefore doth my heart such things arede ?
'Ware lest I sue, and he, unpacified,
Slay me, forlorn and naked, as I plead,
Weak as weak women be, when doffed my martial weed.

16

"Ours is no dalliance as when maid and boy,
Maiden and boy, from rock or wayside tree,
Either with either meeting, dally and toy :
Best join in fight, that quickly we may see
Whom Zeus marks out for glory, him or me."
So brooded he, while Peleus' son drew near
Like Enyalios harnessed cap-a-pie,
On his right shoulder swaying his huge spear,
And round him gleamed the brass like fire or sunrise clear.

17

Hector beheld and trembled : nought he dared
To wait, but left the gates, and shuddering flew.
Achilleus with swift feet behind him fared.
As mountain hawk, most fleet of feathered crew,
A trembling dove doth easily pursue ;
Swerving she flutters ; he, intent to seize,
With savage scream close hounds her through the blue ;
So keenly he swept onward : Hector flees
Beneath his own Troy-wall, and plies his limber knees.

18

All past the watch-tower and the fig-tree tall
Along the chariot-road at speed they fare,
Still swerving outward from the city's wall :
Then reach the two fair-flowing streamlets, where
Scamander's twofold source breaks forth to air.
One flows in a warm tide, and steam doth go
Up from it, as a blazing fire were there :
But the other runs in summer's midmost glow
Cold as the frozen hail, or ice, or chilly snow.

19

Thereby great troughs and meet for washing stand,
Beautiful, stony, where their robes of pride
Troy's wives and daughters washed, ere to the land
The foeman came, in happy peaceful tide.
Flying and following, these they ran beside,
He good that flies, he better that pursues ;
For no fat victim 'twas, nor bullock's hide,
Such meed as men for conquering runners choose,
But Hector's life the prize they ran to win or lose.

20

Look how prize-bearing horses, hard of hoof,
Circle about the goal with eager bound,
And a great guerdon stands, not far aloof,
Tripod or woman, at the funeral mound
Of some dead chief : so thrice they circled round
King Priam's town, their swift feet winged for flight :
While all the gods Olympus' summit crowned,
Looking from high to see the wondrous sight :
And thus the almighty Sire their counsel did invite :

21

"Alas ! I see a loved one with mine eyes
Chased round the city : and my heart doth bleed
For Hector, for that many an ox's thighs
He burnt, where Ida overlooks the mead,
Or in the topmost tower : now with fell speed
Achilleus hunts him round king Priam's town.
But come, ye gods, take counsel and arede,
Or shall we save him now, or strike him down
Under Achilleus' spear, despite his fair renown."

22

To him stern-eyed Athene answered so :
"Dread Thunderer in dark cloud, what words are these ?
What, a mere mortal, fated long ago,
Wouldst thou set free from death's severe decrees ?
Do it : but us gods thy doing shall not please."
And cloud-compelling Zeus in turn rejoined :
"Take heart, dear child, and set thy soul at ease :
I meant it not, but would to thee be kind :
Now do it, nor delay, whate'er is in thy mind."

23

So saying, he quickened her already fain :
Down from Olympus' top eftsoons she hied.
Meanwhile on Hector followed still amain
Achilleus, and his limbs unceasing plied.
As a hound tracks a fawn on a hillside,
Roused from her lair, through slopes and parting trees,
And e'en though crouching 'neath some bush she hide,
Runs ever onward tracking till he seize,
So was not Hector missed of swift Æacides.

24

Oft as the fier sprang towards the town,
Yearning its gates and well-built towers to gain,
If so his comrades, raining javelins down,
Might hinder his great foe, and ward off bane,
So oft Achilles turned him to the plain,
Heading his course ; yet townward still he flew.
E'en as in dreams pursuit and flight are vain,
Nor this can all escape, nor that pursue,
So could not he o'ertake, nor he his fate eschew.

25

How then should Hector his death-doom have fled,
Had not Apollo that worst hour and last
Come near him, and his limbs with vigour sped ?
Nodding, Achilles signalled as he passed
That none at Hector dart or spear should cast,
And, rashly meddling, bear his fame away.
But when again they reached the springs, at last
Zeus did his golden scales in heaven display,
And in them the death-fate of either champion lay.

26

He reared the beam : the lot of Hector drooped
Down to deep Hades : Phœbus left his side :
While to Achilles' ear Athene stooped,
And, standing by him, in winged accents cried :
" Now have I hope, my chief, we twain allied
Shall win great glory, shedding Hector's gore :
Sealed is his doom, and all escape denied,
Ay, though Apollo travail oft and sore,
Low grovelling in the dust on Zeus' Olympian floor.

27

"Now stand thou still and breathe: I go the while
To lead on Hector to the dire event."
Thus she: Achilleus halted with a smile,
And on his steel-tipped shaft respiring leant.
So there she left him, and to Hector went,
Shaped like Deiphobus, and did thus entreat:
"Dear brother, sure thy strength is wellnigh spent,
Chased round the city by thy foe's swift feet.
Come, stand we side by side, and this dread champion meet."

28

Answered great Hector, ruler of the war:
"Deiphobus, of all sons our mother bore
I held thee e'en aforetime dearest far:
But now, methinks, my heart will prize thee more,
For that thou dar'dst, seeing my trouble sore,
Come forth, while others bide in the rampart's shade."
And him bespoke Athene as before:
"Ay truly, parents dear and comrades made
Petition at my knee, and fain my steps had stayed

29

"(So thrilled are all with terror): but for me,
Grief wrung my soul, and would not let me stay:
Now fight we with stout hearts, nor let there be
Sparing of spears, that we may know this day
If that Achilleus make our spoils his prey,
Reaving our lives, or fall beneath thy spear."
Thus saying, Athene deftly led the way.
So, when the twain each other had come near,
First spoke plume-waving Hector for his foe to hear:

30

"No more of flight, Pelides! round the wall
Thrice hast thou chased me while I fled: but now
I stand the risk, to conquer thee or fall.
Come, call we Heaven to witness, I and thou,
For nought so well can ratify man's vow:
I will not treat thee with despicable shame
If Zeus vouchsafe me to lay low thy brow,
But having stripped thine armour, thy dead frame
Will give back to thy friends: swear thou to do the same."

31

Whom frowning stern Achilleus thus bespake:
"Talk not to me, curst wretch, of pact or plight.
As men and lions may no treaty make,
Nor wolves and lambs in friendly league unite,
E'en so we twain may ne'er resign our spite
Nor join in concord, till that either fall,
Sating the war-god's gluttonous appetite.
Now let thine arm be strong: behoves thee call
Thy spear-craft to thine aid, and arts of valour all.

32

"Escape is none: full soon upon the plain
Shall Pallas stretch thee: thou shalt pay the due
For all my friends whom thy fell spear has slain."
Speaking he brandished his long lance and threw:
But Hector saw, and did the death eschew;
He stooped, and o'er him flew the javelin keen
And lodged in earth: it forth Athene drew
And gave unto Achilleus, all unseen
Of Hector, who bespake the champion, proud of mien:

33

"So it has missed, the inevitable dart,
Nor hast thou heard my fate from Zeus aright:
A talker and a trickster sure thou art,
Hoping thy words may rob me of my might.
Thou shalt not pierce my back in craven flight:
No—strike me, if thou canst, right on the breast:
Now shun my lance: would it may rive thee quite!
Then Troy from war should have a little rest,
Thou fallen: for than thou she hath no direr pest."

34

He said, and, shaking, launched in air his dart,
Which smote Pelides' shield unerringly,
But from the disk glanced off, and dropped apart.
Then wroth at heart was Hector, thus to see
The spear wherein he trusted idly flee:
Drooping he stood: no second lance was by:
So loudly to Deiphobus shouted he,
And asked a spear: that other was not nigh.
Then Hector knew the truth, and cried with bitter cry:

35

"Ah me! the gods are calling me to death:
In sooth I deemed Deiphobus stood by,
But in the town he tarries: Pallas' breath
Deceived me. Now at last black death is nigh:
No hope to scape: so will the twain on high,
Zeus and Zeus' son Apollo, who of old
Gave ready aid. My turn is come to die;
Yet in dishonour will I not lie cold,
But having done some deed, hereafter to be told."

36

So saying, he drew forth his keen-edged blade,
Which at his side hung huge and heavy there,
And gathering charged, like eagle on a raid,
Which plainward swoopeth through the clouds of air,
A tender lamb to seize or timorous hare ;
Falchion in hand, so Hector made his spring.
On rushed Achilleus, while fierce rage did glare
From out his eyes, his bosom sheltering
With covert of his shield, that fair and dædal thing.

37

The gleaming helmet nodded on his head,
And all those golden hairs did wave and sway
Which thickly round the cone Hephæstus spread.
As Hesper at night's noon doth take his way
'Mid the other stars, than who no fairer ray
Glances athwart the heavens' unmeasured field,
So glittered the sharp steel, which, keen to slay,
Divine Achilleus in his hand did wield,
Eyeing the foe's fair flesh, where it would soonest yield.

38

The rest was guarded by the harness sheen
Torn from Patroclus by his hand so late :
But 'twixt the shoulder and neck one spot was seen
In the throat, where life is quickest reached by fate :
Thither Achilleus drove his javelin straight :
Right through the tender neck the point found way,
Yet did it not the weasand separate,
Though firmly steeled, that gasping as he lay
Some word of answer yet the stricken man might say.

39

Prostrate he tumbled, ruining in the dust;
And vauntingly thereon Achilleus cried :
" How now, good Hector ? surely thou didst trust,
Slaying Patroclus, thou wouldst safely bide,
Nor heededst me, by distance sundered wide.
Fool ! I, thy better, an avenger grim,
The while was waiting by the smooth ships' side,
Who now thy knees have loosened : limb from limb
The dogs shall tear thy corpse, while Argos buries him."

40

And Hector, faint and gasping, did entreat :
" Now by thy knees, thy parents, I implore,
Let not dogs tear me lying at the fleet,
But take thou presents, brass and gold good store,
In ransom from my sire and mother hoar,
For my poor corpse, that Troy may honour me
With meed of funeral flame when all is o'er."
To whom Achilleus, frowning angrily :
" Dog that thou art, have done : let knees and parents be.

41

" Would that as surely heart and will were mine
To carve and eat thy flesh, my maw to stay,
As none shall ward off dogs from head of thine.
Though treasures ten and twenty fold they weigh
Here on the place, and promise more to pay,
Nay, though with gold king Priam on his throne
Should match thy weight, not then thy dam should lay
Thy body on the couch, and wail her own,
But dogs and ravening birds shall pick thee to the bone."

42

Whom Hector thus with dying voice addressed :
" Full well I knew thee, knew my prayer was vain,
For iron is that heart within thy breast :
Now 'ware, lest Heaven take vengeance for my pain
Then, when by Paris and by Phœbus slain
Thou at the Scæan gate shalt meet thy doom."
So closed his lips, that opened ne'er again ;
And from the limbs the soul went forth to gloom,
Lamenting its own lot, leaving its strength and bloom.

43

Then spake Achilleus to the deaf cold ear :
" Down to the dead ! my fate I shall ensue
When Zeus and the other blest ones bring it near."
So saying, the spear he from the carcass drew,
Laid it apart, and did the arms undo,
Blood-dripping : and the rest came speedily,
And gazed on Hector's form with eager view,
Nor without wounding any passed him by :
And thus would a man speak to his comrade standing nigh :

44

" Aha ! more tractable to touch to-day
This chief, than when he set our ships on flame."
So would they speak, and stab him as he lay.
Then swift Achilleus, having stripped the frame,
Spake to the Achaian host with loud acclaim :
" Good comrades, Argos' leaders martial,
Since Heaven has granted me this man to tame,
Who did great evil, greater than they all,
Come, haste we, and in arms make trial of the wall.

45

“So learn we of the Trojans, what they will,
If they will quit the tower, their champion dead,
Or stay without him and do battle still.
But wherefore hath my mind such things aread?
There at the ships unwept, unburied,
Patroclus lies, whom ne’er will I forget,
While yet I live, and my dear knees are sped;
Nay, though all memory in the grave be let,
My friend, my best beloved, there will I think on yet.

46

“Now, sons of Argos, raise the Pæan strain:
So march we shipward, bearing him along:
‘We have achieved much glory: we have slain
Hector the great, to whom the Trojan throng
Made vows as to a god, their streets among.’”
He said, and planned for Hector deeds of bale.
Boring his feet, he passed a bull-hide thong
From heel to ankle, and from the car’s tail
Bound him in shameful sort, and left his head to trail.

47

The car he clomb, and placed his harness there,
And scourged his steeds: right fain to fly were they:
Dust gathered as they passed: the raven hair
Went trailing, and the head, so graceful, lay
All in the mire: Zeus wrought him shame that day
In his own country, through the tyrannous foe:
So fouled was his fair head: her locks of grey
His mother tore, and her bright veil for woe
Stripped off, and shrieked aloud, to see him handled so.

48

Loud too his father wailed in piteous wise,
And all the people with like mournful show
Through the wide town shrilled forth lamenting cries :
So wild the hubbub of their grief, as though
Troy from her topmost tower were all aglow :
Scarce held the crowd that old man sorrow-wrung,
As through the Dardan gates he strove to go :
To all he sued, low grovelling in the dung,
Accosting each by name, his people, old and young :

49

" Give place, my friends, and though your hearts be sore
Let me go forth upon the battle-plain
To seek the ships, and this stern man implore,
Though violent he and swoln with high disdain,
If so my hoary hairs may reverence gain :
It may be that his sire I shall recall,
Peleus, who gat and reared him, a fell bane
To Trojans, but to me worst grief of all :
So many hath he slain, my sons, brave men and tall.

50

" Yet not for all thus slaughtered, grieve I so,
Albeit much sorrow came to me thereby,
As for one only, Hector, for whom woe
Will sink me to the dead men's company :
Ah, had his fate been in my hands to die !
Then had we sated us with tears and moan,
The dame that gave him birth, poor wretch, and I."
Weeping he spake : the people sighed each one :
Then to the Trojan dames sad Hecuba made moan :

51

"Ah, wherefore should I linger in my pain,
My Hector, having lost thee? night and day
Thou wast our glory, and to all a gain,
Troy's sons and daughters, who did honour pay
To thee as to a god: great fame had they
While life was thine: now hast thou met thy doom."
So she: but the poor wife had heard none say
Hector was dead: for tidings none had come
How that without the gate he tarried, far from home.

52

In her high chamber weaving sat the dame,
Weaving a gorgeous robe with broidery bright:
While her maids set a caldron on the flame,
For Hector's bath, when he should come from fight:
Fond wretch! she knew not by Achilleus' might,
Far from the bath, Pallas had stretched him dead.
The wild shriek reached her from the turret height;
Her limbs gave way; the shuttle and the thread
Dropped down, and to her maids in piteous tone she said:

53

"Come twain of you with me, that I may note
What thing hath chanced: 'tis the queen's voice I hear;
My throbbing heart swells upward to my throat;
My knees beneath me are struck numb for fear:
Surely to Priam's sons some grief is near.
Pray heaven such news ne'er on mine ear may fall!
Yet dread I lest our foe my Hector dear
Chase o'er the plain, nor let him gain the wall,
And so for aye make cease his prowess martial.

54

"For never brooked he 'mid the ranks to stay,
But still leapt forth the foremost, in his pride
Thinking it scorn to any to give way."
Then like a Mænad from the house she hied
With bursting heart, her maidens at her side.
But when she reached the turret and the throng
She stood on the wall and looked : him soon she spied
Trailing before the town : the horses strong
Still haled him to the ships unpityingly along.

55

Upon her eyes a darkness as of death
Came shadowing down : her strength and vigour sped,
Backward she sank and faltered forth her breath :
And, as she fell, afar on earth was shed
The goodly garniture that decked her head,
Wimple, and net, and deftly-twisted braid,
And the bright veil which Cupris when she wed
Gave her, when Hector led her, a young maid,
Home from Eëtion's house, great wealth of dowry paid.

56

Round her her sisters and her kinsfolk stood,
Who held and kept her lest her heart should burst.
So when she waked, her cheek new flushed with blood,
Thus to Troy's dames her misery she rehearsed :
"Ah me, my Hector ! to one fate accursed
We twain were born, thou here in Priam's hall,
And I in Hypoplacian Thebæ, nursed
By good Eëtion's care, an infant small,
Child of sad father : best had I ne'er been at all.

57

"Now thou art gone, the dead men's house to seek,
Gone down, and in our palace leavest me,
A widow : but our child is young and weak,
Who to us twain was born : nor shalt thou be
A glory to him now, nor he to thee :
But though he scape the ruthless Argive bands,
His shall be sorrow and great misery
Henceforth for ever more : for alien hands
His boundary shall remove, and rob him of his lands.

58

"Friendless a child is in the orphan day ;
Still droops his head, his eyes with tears are dim :
To his sire's mates in need he takes his way,
And plucks the skirt or sleeve of him or him ;
Pitying one holds to him the goblet's rim,
Just wets the lips, but leaves the palate dry :
Then one whose sire yet liveth, frowning grim,
Reviles and beats him off : 'Go hence and fly :
No sire of thine doth feast with our fair company.'

59

"Back to his dam will go the child and weep,
Astyanax, who on his father's knees
Ate nought but marrow and rich fat of sheep :
Then when he left off play, he slept at ease
Lapped in soft arms, 'neath nurse's ministries,
On downy couch, full fed with dainties all :
Now must he suffer much, by fate's decrees,
Astyanax, whom thus the Trojans call :
For none but thou did guard their city and long wall.

60

“ Now at the beaked ships, from thy parents far,
The crawling worms, when dogs have made their fare,
Thy naked corpse shall miserably mar :
But in the palace lies thy raiment there,
Wrought by the hands of women, fine and rare.
But all will I consume with burning flame,
Not for thy sake, who none again shalt wear,
But with Troy’s sons and daughters to win fame.”
So wailed she : and thereon loud groaned each Trojan dame.

B O O K XXIII.

1

So wailed they through the city : but the foe,
When they had reached the ships and Helle's mere,
Each to his bark his several way did go :
Yet not Achilles his companions dear
Bade to depart, but spake for them to hear :
" Swift-riding Myrmidons, true mates at need,
Loose not your horses from their chariot-gear,
But draw we nigh e'en now with car and steed,
And for Patroclus wail : for such the dead man's meed.

2

" Then, when of mourning we have had our fill,
Loose we the horses, and let each eat bread."
So spake he, and they mourned with right good will,
Achilleus first : three times around the dead
They drove their steeds, and Thetis made them shed
Hot tears, which on the sand and armour ran,
So mighty he they wept to stir up dread.
'Mid whom Pelides the loud wail began,
Embracing with red hands the breast of that dead man :

3

“Though dead, Patroclus, thy dear shade I greet :
All that I swore is thine at thy desire :
Dragged home is Hector, whom the dogs shall eat,
And twelve fair sons of Trojans at thy pyre
Shall bleed from their gashed throats, to glut mine ire.”
So saying, he planned for Hector shameful deeds,
Beside Patroclus’ bier along the mire
Stretching his corpse : the rest their brazen weeds
Doffed, every man his own, and loosed their clattering steeds.

4

By swift Pelides’ vessel, thronging rife,
They sat them, and he spread the funeral feast.
And many an ox there panted ’neath the knife,
And many a sheep and goat, poor bleating beast ;
And many a white-toothed swine, with brawn increased,
Roasting beside Hephæstus’ flame was spread :
In cupfuls ran the blood, and never ceased.
But Argos’ princes prince Achilleus led
To Agamemnon’s hut, unwilling to be fed.

5

Which when they reached, Atrides gave command
A caldron to set on, so might they pray
The chief to wash the gore from face and hand :
But a great oath he swore them, and said nay :
“Not so, by Zeus, the best and first in sway,
Never shall washing this my head come near,
Till that Patroclus on the pyre I lay,
And shear my locks : for anguish as severe
Shall smite me ne’er again, the while I live on here.

6

“Obey we now the unwelcome call, and eat :
Then, king Atrides, when the morn is bright,
Bid them fetch wood and heap it, as is meet
A dead man furnished should go down to night,
That the fierce fire may burn him out of sight
Quickly, and men resume their daily care.”
He spoke, and they obeyed him ; with their might
They made the banquet ready, and of the fare
Partook : nor was there soul lacked aught of its due share.

7

But when the lust of meat and drink was stayed,
Each sought his several hut, and wooed repose.
Only Pelides, on the margin laid
Of the loud deep, groaned with heartrending throes,
Pillowed in a smooth place, where gently upflows
The landward wave, his comrades round about :
There sleep came down, and loosed him from his woes,
Soft mantling : for his limbs were wearied out,
Giving swift Hector chase by Ilion's high redoubt.

8

When lo ! the ghost of poor Patroclus came,
Voice, eyes, height, raiment, all, most like to see,
Stood o'er his head, and called him by his name :
“Sleep'st thou, Achilleus, nor rememberest me ?
Living, thou lov'dst me ; dead, I fade from thee :
Entomb me quick, that I may pass death's door :
For the ghosts drive me from their company,
Nor let me join them on the further shore :
So in the waste wide courts I wander evermore.

9

“Reach me thy hand, I pray; for ne’er again,
The pile once lit, shalt thou behold thy mate:
Never in life apart from our brave train
Shall we take counsel: but the selfsame fate
Enthralls me now that by my cradle sate.
Thou too art doomed, Achilleus the divine,
To fall and die by sacred Troia’s gate.
Yet one thing more, wilt thou thine ear incline;
Let not my bones in death lie separate from thine.

10

“We twain together in your house were bred,
Since me, poor child, Menœtius did convey
Thither from Opus, for blood rashly shed,
What time Amphidamas’ son upon a day
I slew unwitting, quarrelling at our play.
Welcome I had from Peleus, horseman brave,
Who reared me up to be thy squire in fray.
So let our bones be mingled in the grave,
Hid in the golden urn thy goddess mother gave.”

11

Whom answering swift Achilleus thus addressed:
“Why com’st thou, loved one, thus thy will to show?
All things shall be fulfilled at thy behest.
But stand thou near, that each his arms may throw
Round either’s neck, and have his fill of woe.”
So saying, he clutched at him with hands outspread,
But caught not: shrieking went the soul below
Like smoke: up leapt Achilleus, chill with dread,
Smote his flat palms together, and words of pity said:

12

"O heaven! there doth abide among the dead
Semblance and life, though thought is theirs no more :
For all night long hath stood above my head
The soul of poor Patroclus, wailing sore,
And told its will : his very form it wore."
So saying, in each he wakened sorrow's spring :
Red morning broke as they their grief did pour
Round the pale corpse. But Agamemnon king
Sent men and mules abroad, good store of wood to bring.

13

With them a stout man went to lead the band,
Brave Mériones, the Cretan's henchman bred.
So on they went with hatchets in their hand
And well-twined ropes : the mules before them led :
Asteep, aslope, aslant, athwart they sped :
Then, when the glades of Ida they had found,
Ida, by many a fountain nourishèd,
They with their long-edged steel the oaks leaf-crowned
Smote sturdily : and these went thundering to the ground.

14

Still, as they fell, the trees they hewed in twain,
And bound them on the mules : through brake and briar
The mules went trampling, eager for the plain.
Each bore his log : for so did he require,
Brave Mériones, the Cretan's trusty squire.
Then on the beach they laid them by the flood,
Where for Patroclus and himself a pyre
Achilleus had ordained : so there the wood
They laid, and sat them down, a thronging multitude.

15

But soon the chief his Myrmidonians bade
To arm, and harness to the chariots loud
Their steeds : and up they stood in arms arrayed.
There went each chariot with its warrior proud,
The horsemen first, then footmen in a cloud,
While in the midst his comrades bare the dead.
The plucked hair clothed his body like a shroud :
Moving behind, Achilles held the head,
All tears : for he was brave whom to death's house he sped.

16

Now when they reached the place whereof he spake,
They stayed the corpse, and heaped much timber there :
And other thought did fleet Achilles take :
Standing apart, he shore his yellow hair
Which for Spercheius clustering erst he ware,
And spake in wrath, with eyes on the sea-foam :
"Spercheius, vainly Peleus made his prayer,
Vowing to thee, if safe I should come home,
The clippings of my locks, and eke a hecatomb.

17

"And fifty rams he vowed for me to kill,
Where at thy spring thy shrine and altar stand.
So he : yet didst thou not his vow fulfil.
Now, since I go not back to my dear land,
This hair I place in my Patroclus' hand."
So saying, in the dead hand the hair he laid,
And in their breasts the flame of sorrow fanned :
And wailing had there been till twilight shade,
But in Atrides' ear the chief monition made :

18

“ Atrides (for thy word is aye the first
With Argos’ sons), enough of tears is shed :
Now from the pyre be all that crowd dispersed,
And bid them as they may the banquet spread :
Be ours, who sorest sorrow for the dead,
This care, and let the chiefs beside us stay.”
So when Atrides heard the words he said,
Back to their ships the host he sent away ;
The mourners stayed the while, and did the pyre array.

19

A hundred feet each way the pile they made,
Then laid at top the dead man, grieving sore :
And many a sheep and crook-horned ox they flayed
With zealous care, whose fat Achilleus tore
From off them, and therewith bestrewed all o’er
His friend’s pale corpse, and the flesh round him massed.
Then jars of honey and of oil he bore
And set them there, and four fair horses cast
Right strongly on the pyre, while groans came thick and fast.

20

Two dogs of nine that gathered round his board
He slew, and flung them on that slaughter-hill :
And twelve brave sons of Trojans with the sword
Despatched he there, intent on deeds of ill.
Then bade he the fierce fire to rage its fill,
And wailed, and called on his dear friend by name :
“ Patroclus ! in the grave I greet thee still :
What things I promised, I perform the same :
Twelve sons of Troy lie dead, with thee to feed the flame.

21

“But Hector, him not fire but dogs shall eat.”
Threatening he said it: yet the dogs their prey
Missed ne’ertheless, for Aphrodite sweet
Still drove them from the body night and day,
And with rich oil embalmed that lifeless clay:
While Phœbus drew a blue-black cloud from high
Down to the plain whereon the dead man lay,
And wrapped him round, lest the sun’s burning eye
The moisture from his limbs and tissued skin should dry.

22

Nor yet on dead Patroclus’ pyre the while
The flames had fastened. Then a counsel new
Devised Achilleus: turning from the pile,
To Boreas and to Zephyr, those strong two,
He prayed, and promised sacrifice to do;
And oftentimes pouring from a goblet fair
He bade them come and kindle in his view
The body and the wood: she heard his prayer,
Iris, and to the winds set forth that word to bear.

23

In blustering Zephyr’s house the airy brood,
Assembled all, were feasting royally:
Swift running, on the threshold Iris stood:
Whom, when the brethren did at once espy,
They rose, and each besought her to come nigh:
Yet would she not sit down, but thus did say:
“No seat for me: o’er Ocean back I fly
To Ethiop land, where to the gods men slay
Herds of a hundred beeves, that I may feast as they.

24

"But Peleus' son makes suit to North and West
To come, and vows much sacrifice to do,
So ye but light the pyre, whereon doth rest
Patroclus, whom the gathered Argives rue."
This said, she went: uprose the mighty two
With vehement din, driving the clouds before:
Swift to the deep they came, and, as they blew,
High swelled the wave: so reached they Troy's fair shore:
Then fell they on the pile, and loud the blaze did roar.

25

All night about the pile the flame they fanned
With their shrill breath: all night the chief also
From a fair bowl, a goblet in his hand,
Drew wine and poured it, and made earth to flow,
Calling Patroclus' spirit down below.
As sire the ashes of a son bemoans
Who, dead ere marriage, works his parents woe,
So wailed Achilles, burning his friend's bones,
As round the pyre he paced, and doubled groans on groans.

26

But soon as Phosphor came to herald day,
Whom following, Morn makes yellow all the sea,
Then the flame languished and the pyre waxed grey:
And the swift winds addressed them home to flee
O'er Thracian foam, that thundered, raving free.
And Peleus' son, worn out with many an ache,
Turned from the pile, and slumbered peacefully,
Till on his sleep the din of crowds did break,
Attending Atreus' son: he roused him, sat, and spake:

27

“Great king, and ye the flower of Argive men,
First pour black wine, the flaming pile to soak,
Far as the blaze was stretched: collect we then
The bones of good Patroclus, as he spoke:
Soon may man know them, e’en in soot and smoke:
For in the midst he lay: the victims all
Apart lay mingled, horse and warrior folk.
These in a golden urn with double caul
Bestow we till myself go down to Hades’ hall.

28

“A mound, no great one, I would have ye rear,
Just seemly and no more: in after day
A larger those shall make, who linger here
In the smooth ships, when I have passed away.”
Thus did he speak, and they did straight obey:
First with black wine they slaked the fiery bed:
Down sank the embers: then, much weeping, they
Gathered the white bones of the gentle dead
Into a golden urn, with double caul bespread.

29

To the hut they brought them, and wrapped round with
Then drew a ring, and hollowed out the ground [lawn;
Within it, and put back the earth withdrawn,
And homeward wended, having reared their mound.
Meanwhile Achilles bade the host sit round,
And from the ships a wealth of prizes bore,
Horses, and mules, and kine with fair horns crowned,
And caldrons bright, and tripods in good store,
And women well-begirt, and iron gleaming hoar.

30

First fixed he prizes for the drivers bold ;
A woman for the first, a spinster rare,
And an eared tripod that could measures hold
Twenty and two ; the next, a six-years' mare,
Unbroken ; in its womb a mule it bare ;
The third, a caldron, to the fire yet new,
Four measures its content, unsmirched and fair ;
The fourth man's meed was golden talents two ;
The fifth, a double dish, which kept its virgin hue.

31

Upright he stood, and spake to all the band :
" Great king, and ye the chiefs of this array,
Lo, here the prizes for the drivers stand.
Now, were we met some other funeral day,
Myself the foremost prize would bear away :
For well ye wot my steeds the foremost be
In strength and speed, for sickness or decay
They ne'er shall know : Poseidon, even he,
Gave them to my great sire, who made them o'er to me.

32

" Yet we will rest to-day, my steeds and I,
Reft as they are of their loved charioteer,
So strong, so gentle, who would oftentimes ply
Their manes with trickling oil, to give them cheer,
First having washed their coats in water clear.
Now they stand still and mourn for his dear ghost,
Trailing their manes on earth in anguish drear.
But you, the rest, make ready through the host,
Whoso of firm-hoofed steeds and well-joined car can boast."

33

He ended, and the drivers swift did rise,
Foremost by far Eumelus, proud and fain,
Son of Admetus, in all horsecraft wise:
Then rose strong Diomed of Tydeus' strain,
And yoked the horses from Æneas ta'en
When Phœbus saved him, born of Tros' own breed:
Next Menelaus with the yellow mane,
Who to the chariot his fleet pair did lead,
Æthe, his brother's mare, Podargus, his own steed.

34

That mare a wight to Agamemnon gave,
Rich Echepolus, that he might not fare
Along with him to Troy, like warrior brave,
But bide at home; for vast possessions there
Zeus made his own, where Sicyon's meadows are:
Her 'neath the yoke he led full fain to run:
Fourth did Antilochus his car prepare,
Child of true-hearted Nestor, Neleus' son;
And Pylian were the steeds that whirled his chariot on.

35

Beside him his good father in his ear
Spake wisdom to a mind not void of thought:
"My son, though young, the gods have held thee dear,
Zeus and Poseidon, and all arts have taught
Of horsecraft: small the need to teach thee aught.
Well canst thou turn the goal: but all too slow
Thine horses are, whence mischief may be wrought:
And fleetier far thy rivals' steeds to go,
Yet none is wise as thou device and skill to know.

36

"Come now, dear boy, and learn from my discourse
All wisdom, lest in vain thou hope the prize.
By wisdom trees are cloven, not by force;
By wisdom o'er dark seas the helmsman wise
Guides his swift ship, despite of wintry skies;
By wisdom driver driver doth outride.
For who on steed and car alone relies
Drives wildly all abroad from side to side,
And o'er the course unchecked his horses wander wide:

37

"But who with weaker steeds hath yet a brain,
Watching the goal, drives toward it ever more,
Nor e'er at random pulls the bull-hide rein,
But holds it firm, and eyes the wight before.
But for the goal, 'tis easy to explore:
A trunk, a cubit's height, surmounts the land,
Of oak or larch, unrotted at the core:
Beside it right and left two white stones stand
At narrowing of the way: 'tis smooth on either hand.

38

"'Twas some man's tomb who lies beneath the plain,
Or haply 'twas a goal in days gone by.
There doth Achilles now the goal ordain:
So, grazing it, drive car and horses nigh;
Sway, as thou sitt'st, thy body warily
Just to the left, and chide with lash severe
Thy right-hand steed, and give him rein to fly;
But let the left-hand graze the goal so near,
That scarce thy wheel's round nave may seem its edge to clear.

39

"Yet be thou ware, nor on the pillar smite,
Lest horse and car be shent by the sharp blow,
To thine own shame and other men's delight :
Be wise, and watch the way where thou dost go,
For if at the goal's verge thou pass thy foe,
Lives not the man from thee shall win the lead
Nor horse whose stride shall reach thee, not e'en though
Arion's self were there, of Heaven's own seed,
Or those Laomedon drove, this land's redoubted breed."

40

So, having told his precepts every whit
To his dear son, sat down the ancient king.
And Mériones the fifth his steeds made fit.
They climbed their chariots, and the lots did fling :
Achilleus shook : first did the lot outspring
Of Nestor's son ; next was Eumelus' name ;
Then Menelaus, skilled in spear-throwing ;
Him followed Mériones ; at last there came
Great Diomed, Tydeus' son, though first in strength and fame.

41

In rank they stood : Achilleus showed the goal
Far on the level plain, and set thereby
His sire's attendant, Phoenix, godlike soul,
To mind the course and tell it truthfully.
Then all at once they raised their whips on high,
And smote their horses with the thongs, and cheered
With heartening speech : swiftly the steeds did fly,
Leaving the ships behind : the thick dust, reared
Upright beneath their breasts, like cloud or storm appeared.

42

The fair loose manes went floating on the gale :
Now smote the cars upon the foodful plain,
Now sprang in air aloft : the drivers pale
Each in his seat stood up : each heart beat fain
For victory : each one's voice in cheering strain
Called to his steeds : through lanes of dust they flew.
But when at length the last course towards the main
They 'gan to measure, then what each could do
Was seen, and the long stride longer and longer grew.

43

Before the rest Eumelus' mares did fly ;
Tros' breed came next, Tydides' stallions fleet,
Not severed by long distance, but full nigh,
For aye they seemed as climbing the car's seat :
Eumelus' back and shoulders felt the heat,
As their stretched heads hung o'er him, panting strong.
Now had they passed, or halved the prize, I weet,
But angry Phœbus did Tydides wrong,
Plucking from out his hands the twisted glittering thong.

44

Tears filled his eyes, his rival's steeds to see
Still faring onward, while his own were shent,
Running unwhipped. But Pallas presently
Perceived the fraud, and hurried to prevent :
Straight to her own true knight her steps she bent,
Gave back the lash, strength on the steeds bestowed :
After Eumelus then in wrath she went
And snapped his yoke ; the horses from the road
Went swerving, and to earth the pole fell, a dead load.

45

He from the car beside the wheel was flung,
Mouth, nostrils, elbows torn in ghastly wise,
And forehead crushed and battered: his weak tongue
Of utterance failed, and tears o'erbrimmed his eyes.
While far beyond the rest Tydides flies,
Holding his steeds: for Pallas did inspire
Their limbs with force, and made him win the prize.
Next Menelaus; whom approaching nigher
Antilochus cheered on the horses of his sire:

46

"Step out, and every muscle stretch forthright.
I bid you not with those dispute the game,
Tydides' steeds; for Pallas lends them might
And swiftness, and their master crowns with fame.
But catch Atrides' chariot, nor be lame
Nor lag behind, lest Æthe, even she,
A poor weak mare, should make you droop for shame.
Why flag you, my good steeds? now list to me,
For I will tell you truth, and what I tell shall be:

47

"No more shall Nestor, shepherd of the host,
Provide you food, but slay you with sharp steel,
If through your sloth the better prize be lost.
But follow on, and speed with all your zeal:
Myself will watch the occasion, and so deal
As in the strait to pass him." Thus he cried:
They, trembling at their master's fierce appeal,
Ran faster for a space: and soon he spied
The narrowing of the way, pent in on either side.

48

It was a cleft, where wintry floods had run
Beyond their bed, and hollowed all the place :
There Menelaus drove, a clash to shun.
Antilochus drew his steeds a little space
Off from the road, and at the side gave chase.
Atrides, all adread, let loose his tongue :
" Good friend, thou drivest madly ; slack thy pace ;
The way soon broadens ; thou canst pass ere long ;
Hold, lest our chariots clash, and both should suffer wrong."

49

He spoke : that other faster and more fast
Plied whip and goad, as though he heard him not.
Far as the limit of a discus' cast
Sent by a young man's arm, a trial shot
To prove his strength, on ran they, panting hot :
Back fell Atrides, and pulled in the rein,
Lest they should clash within that perilous spot,
O'erturning the fair cars, and on the plain
Themselves be tumbled forth, as for the prize they strain.

50

And Atreus' son upbraidingly did cry :
" Antilochus, none lives than thou more base :
Begone ! who calls thee prudent speaks a lie :
Yet without oath thou shalt not win the race."
So he ; then shouted to his steeds apace :
" Come, linger not, nor stand in piteous woe ;
Their feet and knees will sooner lose their brace
Than yours : for youth forsook them long ago."
They feared, and forward sprang, bringing him near his foe.

51

Meantime the Argives seated in their ring
Surveyed the steeds that o'er the champaign flew.
First were they noted of the Cretan king,
Who sat on a high place of stately view :
Though far apart, that cheering voice he knew,
And of the foremost steed he soon was ware,
A steed that for the rest was bay of hue,
But a white moon upon his forehead bare :
Upright he stood, and thus bespake the Argives there :

52

" Friends, Argive leaders, and grave seniors hoar,
See I alone the steeds, or likewise ye ?
Another car, methinks, is to the fore,
Another charioteer, so seems to me :
Doubtless those others somewhere crippled be
Which ran but now the first, the prize to gain :
Them, as they turned the goal, I late did see,
But now I see them not, and all in vain
My searching eyes look out across the Trojan plain.

53

" Perchance the driver dropped the reins, nor checked
His coursers by the goal, but missed the turn :
There doubtless he fell out, his chariot wrecked,
While they ran wild, so did their fury burn.
But now stand up and look ye : for discern
Clearly I cannot : of Ætolian breed
The man should seem, lord of the Argive kerne,
Son of brave Tydeus, valiant Diomedes."
Whom with unseemly words bespoke Oileus' seed :

54

“Cretan, why babble on? the mares afar
Course o’er the champaign with high-lifted tread:
Not younger thou than other Argives are,
Nor sharper look the eyes from out thine head:
But still thy tongue runs on: such words, so said,
Befit thee not: better are here than thou.
Still lead his horses that aforetime led,
Eumelus, who the reins doth hold e’en now.”
To whom Idomeneus spake with darkly lowering brow:

55

“Aias, in foul words first, in all the rest
Far short, for rude and churlish is thy clay,
Come, wager me a tripod for a test,
Or caldron, and let Agamemnon say
Whose steeds are first; so shalt thou learn and pay.”
He said; and straight Oileus’ son upstood
Eager in turn to say his angry say:
And bitter words had worsened their ill blood,
But that Achilleus rose, and spake as seemed him good:

56

“Cease from your commerce of reproaches keen,
Aias and Creta’s king: it fits not you:
Right angry now were both of you, I ween,
At other men, whoso the like should do.
So in the ring sit still, and sitting view
The approaching steeds: soon will themselves be here,
Full fain for victory: then shall each see true
What horses second, and what first appear.”
He ceased: and, driving on, Tydides soon drew near.

57

Still lashed he his steeds' shoulders; on they flew,
Measuring the ground with many an onward leap;
Still on their driver flakes of dust they threw:
With tin and gold enwrought, the car did sweep
At the heels of the fleet horses: nor yet deep
In the light dust the wheels' imprint was set:
So hurrying, flying, on their course they keep,
Till in the ring he halted: plenteous sweat
Trickled from chest and mane, and earth therewith was wet.

58

Down leapt he from the car: the lash he leant
Against the yoke: nor Sthenelus the brave
Was slack to help, but took incontinent
The gifts allotted: to his mates he gave
To lead away the beauteous woman-slave
And the eared tripod, and did soon untie
The steeds. Antilochus next his horses drave,
Whose craft, not speed, obtained him mastery;
Yet still Atrides' car, advancing, pressed him nigh.

59

Far as a courser from the wheel doth keep,
Hurrying his lord along the champaign vast,—
His tail's long hairs just o'er the felly sweep;
He, close before, runs faster and more fast,
Scant space between, though much the ground o'erpast,—
So far from Nestor's son Atrides there
Was distant: 'twas at first a quoit's full cast,
But quickly he came up: the prowess rare
Of Æthe grew more great, king Agamemnon's mare.

60

Had but the race been longer for them two,
No doubt had been, but he had passed his foe.
But Mériones, the Cretan's henchman true,
Missed of Atrides by a lance's throw,
For his sleek-coated steeds were far most slow,
And he least apt at driving in a race.
Last came Admetus' son, deject in woe,
Dragging his chariot and his steeds apace:
Whom when Achilles saw, he pitied his sad case.

61

Standing among them, spake the swift of feet:
"See, the best man the last of all the field!
Come, give we him the second, as is meet:
The first to Tydeus' son he well may yield."
So he; and plaudits from the Argives pealed:
Then had Eumelus straight received the steed,
And the whole host the arbitrament had sealed,
But that Antilochus, great Nestor's seed,
Rose up, and as at law with Peleus' son did plead:

62

"Achilleus, sore will be my discontent
If this thou doest: to rob me thou dost mean,
For that his chariot and his steeds are shent,
Good though he be: he should have prayed, I ween,
To the blest gods, and last he had not been.
But if his lot be piteous in thine eyes,
Gold hast thou, brass, sheep, slaves, and coursers keen;
Thence give him, after, e'en a greater prize,
Or, if thou wilt, e'en now, that these may call thee wise.

63

"But mine I give not up: if any please,
Let him stand forth, and battle do with me."
Smiled at the word divine Æacides
To hear his well-loved comrade speak so free,
And thus returned swift answer to his plea:
"Antilochus, if from my stores within
Thou bidd'st me grace Eumelus, it shall be:
His be the brazen cuirass I did win
From the Pæonian chief, lapped round with molten tin.

64

"Of goodly price it were, to sell or buy."
He spake, and gave Automedon command
To bear it from his hut, who swift did hie,
And bore, and gave it to Eumelus' hand.
Gladly he took it. Straightway did upstand
King Menelaus, and the wrath displayed
He to Antilochus bore: into his hand
The herald gave the staff, and silence made
Throughout the Achaian ranks, while thus the monarch said:

65

"Antilochus, once wise, what hast thou done?
To stain my honour and my steeds outvie
By trickery, when thine own were worst to run!
But come, ye chiefs of Argos' chivalry,
Favour apart, the cause between us try,
Lest some Achaian after call me knave,
Saying, Atrides conquered by a lie,
Winning the mare, for that the steeds he drave
Were weaker, but himself the stronger and more brave.

66

“Nay, I myself will judge, and none shall call
My judgment false, for I will speak the right :
Come now, Antilochus, standing before all,
Before thy good steeds and thy chariot bright,
And holding in thy hands the scourge so light,
The glittering thong wherewith thou drav'st erewhile,
Touching the steeds, swear by Poseidon's might
Thou hadst no thought to shend my car by guile.”
And Nestor's son returned in wise and courteous style :

67

“Forgive me, for I am thy younger far,
And thou, Atrides, older and more fit.
Thou know'st a young man's wanderings, what they are :
More hasty are his thoughts, and scant his wit.
Bear with me then : the prize, I give thee it,
The mare I won : if from my hut beside
Thou ask aught greater, gladly I submit :
Far better thus than all my days abide
An exile from thy love, with heaven unpacified.”

68

So spake he, and the mare he straightway led
And to Atrides gave, whose heart was healed,
E'en as on wheat-ears healing dewes are shed
When the young corn is waving o'er the field ;
E'en so, Atrides, thy torn heart was healed.
Then to the youth he spoke in kindly strain :
“Antilochus, to thee I now will yield,
Though angry : for aforetime rash or vain
Thou wast not : now thy youth has triumphed o'er thy brain.

69

"Better not thus with men thy betters deal :
For other's speech had swayed me not as thine :
But since thou much hast borne and shown much zeal,
Thy brother and thy good sire, for cause of mine,
I grant thine asking, and withal resign
The mare, albeit mine own, that these may find
That to ungentle thoughts I ne'er incline."
To the youth's friend Noëmon he resigned
The mare, and took the caldron that so brightly shined.

70

Then Méridones, in order as he drave,
Took the fourth prize : the fifth was left unta'en,
The dish, which Peleus' son to Nestor gave,
Bearing it round, and spoke in courteous strain :
"Take this, old sire, a keepsake to remain
For dead Patroclus : him thou shalt not see
Here in the ranks of Argives e'er again :
Be this thy meed : for games are not for thee,
Boxing, nor wrestling-bout, nor spearmen's rivalry,

71

"Seeing old age is heavy on thee now."
To his hand he gave it, and the old man was glad,
And took it, and replied with lightsome brow :
"Ay, true is all as thou hast said, dear lad :
No longer are my knees with strength yclad,
Nor my hands lightly from my shoulders play.
Were I but young and had the might I had,
As on king Amarynceus' burying-day,
When for the Epeian folk his sons did games array !

72

"Epeian or Ætolian there was none
To match me then, nor Pylian yet beside.
Boxing, I conquered Enops' valiant son,
Wrestling, Ancæus, who my force defied :
Iphichus I outran, though swift to stride :
Phyleus I overshot, and Polydore :
Only by Actor's sons was I outvied
In driving, who o'ermatched me, struggling sore :
For 'twas the last, best prize, left when the rest were o'er.

73

"Twins were these two : one reined the chariot still,
Still reined the chariot, one the whip did ply.
Such was I once : now let the younger skill
These feats to do : to cruel age must I
Give way, who then could with the strongest vie.
Now go, thy comrade's funeral games pursue.
I take thy gift, and my old heart beats high
That still thou bear'st in mind our friendship true,
Nor lett'st me 'mid the throng of Argives lack my due.

74

"For thee, may Heaven's dear grace thy deed repay."
He said : Pelides hastened through the throng,
Thus having hearkened to the old man's say.
Then fixed he prizes for the boxers strong :
A sturdy mule, unyoked, he led along
And tied her in the circle, six years old,
Hard task to tame her pride with bit or thong :
A double cup the loser's shame consoled :
Then rose he in full view, and thus his purpose told :

75

"Atridæ and ye chiefs, let champions two
Stand forth, our strongest, and contest this game,
The boxers' match : whom Phœbus shall endue
With mastery, and his mates the best proclaim,
Home let him bear yon sturdy mule to tame :
The double cup shall cheer the beaten one."
He spake : and up there rose one huge of frame,
Well skilled in boxing, Panopeus' stout son,
Epeius, seized the mule, and vauntingly begun :

76

"Come on, who fain the cup would bear away :
But for the mule, resign her I ne'er will
To any foe : for I am best, I say.
Is't not enough that I can fight but ill ?
Man was not meant in all things to have skill.
For thus I say, and what I say shall stand,
His bones I mean to break, his blood to spill :
So let his friends be present in close band,
To bear him off from field, laid prostrate by my hand."

77

He said : and all in silence hushed their tongue :
Only Euryalus rose, of godlike frame,
Son of Mekisteus, from Talaion sprung,
Who erst at Œdipus his burying came
To Thebes, and all outvied in that fierce game.
Him great Tydides for the combat plied
With heartening speech : for much he wished him fame.
First round his loins a belt he deftly tied,
Then bound his hands with thongs, cut from a wild bull's hide.

78

So when these twain had donned the boxer's gear,
Into the middle of the ring they go :
Each fronting each, their stalwart hands they rear,
Together dash, and mingle blow with blow :
Terribly clashed their jaws, and sweat did flow
Down every limb, forth oozing from each pore :
Then darted forth Epeius on his foe
And smote his cheek as round he peered : no more
Stood he, nor his faint knees that giant bulk upbore.

79

As leaps a fish up, by the weedy shore,
When the north wind runs shivering o'er the tide,
And straight by the black wave is covered o'er,
So leapt he up : Epeius, champion tried,
Held and upbore him : swift his comrades hied,
And led him through the ring, trailing his feet,
Swaying his loose-hung head from side to side,
Spuing thick blood : so placed him on a seat
All dazed, then went and took the guerdon of defeat.

80

Then other prizes did the chief set forth
For all to see, prizes of wrestling sore ;
A tripod for the winner, of much worth ;
Men said, twelve oxen was the price it bore ;
But for the loser, all men's eyes before,
He brought into the ring a captive dame,
Her price four oxen, skilled in diverse lore :
Then, standing up, aloud he did exclaim :
" Stand forth, whome'er it likes to venture in this game."

81

He spake : and Telamonian Aias rose,
Uprose too shrewd Odysseus : so they strip,
Gird them, come forward, and together close,
Each seizing hold of each with iron grip,
Close as roof-beams by cunning workmanship
Are welded each to each to ward off rain :
Big drops of sweat adown their limbs did drip,
And their backs creaked beneath the hand's fierce strain,
While shoulder and side brake out with wheals of crimson

82

[grain.

So strove they for the tripod painfully,
Nor could Odysseus make strong Aias slide,
Nor Aias trip his foe, so stout was he ;
Till, when the gazers' patience sore was tried,
At length huge Aias to Odysseus cried :
"Laertes' son, who many a wile dost know,
Lift, or be lifted : then let Zeus decide."
He spake, and heaved him ; but the wily foe
Chopped his knee-joint behind, and loosed the limbs below.

83

Backward he fell : Odysseus to him clove
Falling : the people gazed, as half in fear.
Divine Odysseus next his rival hove,
Just stirred him from the ground, but failed to rear,
Yet locked his knee : on earth they tumbled near
Each to the other, soiled with dust and clay.
Now had they tried another bout severe,
But, starting up, Achilleus bade them stay :
"Gallants, contend no more, nor wear your strength away !"

84

“Ye both have won: take each an equal meed
And go, that others in the games may share.”
So he: they heard him gladly and gave heed,
Wiped off the dust, and donned their tunics fair.
Swift to the ring the racer’s meeds he bare,
A silver bowl: six measures it did crave
To fill it: and its beauty passed compare,
For ’twas Sidonian work, and o’er the wave
Phœnician sailors bore it, and to Thoas gave.

85

That bowl Eunëus to Patroclus paid
In ransom for Lycaon, Priam’s seed;
Which now the racer’s prize Achilleus made,
In his friend’s honour, for the first in speed:
A bull he gave the next, of sturdy breed,
A gold half-talent for the beaten one.
Then, standing up, he spake for all to heed:
“Stand forth, who list to prove your speed to run.”
And at the word uprose Oileus’ fleet-foot son.

86

Rose too Odysseus: last Antilochus rose,
For of the younger sort his speed was best.
In line they stand: the goal Achilleus shows:
Then pour they from the base: before the rest
Aias: whom following close Odysseus pressed,
Close as the shuttle back and forward sped
By hand of woman grazes her fair breast,
Still as athwart the loom she draws the thread;
So close Odysseus ran, and still in Aias’ tread

87

He trod, or ere the dust did o'er it fall,
And still his rival's shoulders felt the heat
Of his warm breath: loud cheered the Achaians all
As he strained on, and bade him still be fleet.
Till when at length the course was nigh complete,
To stern-eyed Pallas inly thus he prayed:
"Come, goddess, to my side, and speed my feet."
So prayed he; and Athene lent him aid:
Feet, ankles, hands above she light and nimble made.

88

As at the goal they darted, Aias' tread
Slid—for Athene tripped him—where the dung
Of oxen lay, that for Patroclus bled,
And all befouled were nostrils, lips, and tongue.
Swift on the bowl, his prize, Odysseus sprung,
While Aias seized the bull, and sputtering there,
Holding its horn, spoke out the host among:
"Ah! 'twas a goddess tripped me, she whose care
Still on Odysseus tends, e'en as his dam she were."

89

So he: the Argives laughed to see his case:
Then last Antilochus bore his prize away,
And 'mid the host spake out, with smiling face:
"Ye know it well, good friends, nor need I say
How the gods still to age their honours pay:
Aias a little doth my years outrun:
But *he* was born and bred in earlier day;
Green eld, they say, is his: 'twere hardly done
To vie with him in speed, except for Peleus' son."

80

So speaking, homage for his speed he paid
To swift Achilleus, who in turn replied :
“ Not vainly, friend, shall this thy praise be said :
Another gold half-talent take beside.”
So he : the other took the gift with pride.
Then brought Pelides a long-shadowing spear
Into the ring, with shield and helmet tried,
Which erst Patroclus won, Sarpedon’s gear,
And, standing up, spoke out for the Argive host to hear :

91

“ Now for these prizes let two men, our best,
Their harness don, and, spear in hand, begin
Before the throng each other’s strength to test.
Whoe’er shall first attain the dainty skin,
Pierce through the arms, and touch the parts within,
To him I give this Thracian sword so fair
Which from Asteropæus I did win ;
And let the twain these arms in common share :
Also a feast within for both I will prepare.”

92

He said : then rose the seed of Telamon,
And Diomed, Tydeus’ son, did eke upstand.
Retiring from the throng, their arms they don,
Then to the midst advance, with strong hearts manned,
Fierce glaring : wonder held the Achaian band.
So, countering each with each in level field,
Thrice they rushed on, thrice battled hand to hand :
When Aias pierced the plate of the broad shield,
Yet reached he not the skin : the corslet would not yield.

93

But Tydeus' son the point of his bright spear
Still at the neck above the buckler drave,
Till that the host, for Aias' life in fear,
Bade them surcease and equal guerdons have :
But Tydeus' son received the Thracian glaive.
Then brought the chief a quoit of hardest grain,
Sometime the plaything of Eëtion brave ;
But when Achilles had Eëtion slain,
Then with his other goods 'twas shipped across the main.

94

Then, standing up, he to the host did say :
" Come forth, who for this guerdon fain would vie :
Who wins it, though his fields stretch far away,
Full five years long it shall his wants supply :
Ploughman or swain he need not send to buy
Iron from the town, while as that store shall last."
And Polypoetes rose, his strength to try ;
Rose too Leonteus, who in thews surpassed,
And Telamonian Aias, and Epeius vast.

95

In line they stood : the quoit Epeius heaved,
Whirled it, and sent : loud laughed the Achaian throng.
Valiant Leonteus next the cast achieved :
Then Aias from his hand so huge and strong
Launched it in air, and all the marks o'erflung.
But when great Polypoetes made it fly,
Far as a sheep-hook flies the herds among
Hurled by a shepherd's arm right easily,
So flew it o'er the ring : and loudly did they cry.

96

Straightway the mates of Polypætes rose
And to the ships the royal gift conveyed.
Meantime he set the prize for archers' bows,
Ten two-edged axes, ten with single blade.
A mast of a dark vessel he upstayed
In the far sand, and did thereto belay
A fluttering dove, the which their mark he made :
" And he whose shaft the fluttering dove shall slay,
Take he the two-edged axes to his home away :

97

" But from the bird who erring strikes the cord,
Take he the single, being the lesser wight."
He spake : then rose the strength of Teucer lord,
And Mériones, squire of the Cretan knight.
The lots they shuffled in a helmet bright,
And the first place was Teucer's : from the string
Instant he sent the shaft with main and might ;
Yet vowed he not unto Apollo king
Of goodly lambs first-born a hecatomb to bring.

98

The bird he missed (Apollo grudged that feat),
But struck the cord that round its foot was wound.
Severed the cord was by the arrow fleet :
Heavenward the bird went soaring : to the ground
Fluttered the string, while plaudits pealed around.
Swift from his hand the bow the Cretan drew,
Holding the shaft already as 'twas bound,
And instant vowed to Phœbus, marksman true,
Of goodly lambs first-born a hecatomb to do.

99

High 'neath the clouds he marked the timid dove,
And sudden pierced her wheeling in a ring.
Straight through her went the shaft, and from above
Fell at the archer's feet: the wounded thing,
On the tall vessel's mast down settling,
Drooped its faint neck in helpless disarray,
And feebly flapped and fluttered with its wing:
The spirit left its body: far away
It tumbled: with dazed eyes the thronging bands survey.

100

The two-edged axes Mériones did take,
The single Teucer took, to have and hold.
Then brought Pelides for his comrade's sake
A long spear, and a caldron of rich mould,
Which for an ox aforetime had been sold:
Forth stood the wights of skill to hurl the spear:
Uprose Atrides, who the host controlled,
And uprose Mériones, swift Ares' peer,
When straightway Peleus' son spoke out for both to hear:

101

"Royal Atrides, for thy powers we know,
In hurling of the spear how skilled thou art,
And how in might the rest thou dost outgo,
Take to thyself the caldron and depart,
And give we to brave Mériones the dart,
If so thou wilt: for best methinks it were."
He said: nor loth was Agamemnon's heart:
The spear had Mériones: the caldron fair
He took, and gave it o'er unto Talthybius' care.

BOOK XXIV.

1

THE ring was broken, and the host each one
Passed to their vessels, supper to provide
And pleasure them with sleep : but Peleus' son
Wailed for his friend, nor sleep the balm supplied
It brings to all : he tossed from side to side,
Mourning the strength and bloom he held so dear,
And all the woes they did together bide,
Battles of men and stormy billows drear :
And as he thought of these, he dropped a big-swoln tear.

2

Now on his side he turned him, now again
Lay on his back, now grovelled : then upright
He sprang, and wailing wandered by the main,
Till over beach and billow broke the light,
When to his car the horses he made tight,
And from the seat fastened his foeman dead
Thrice round the barrow of Patroclus wight
Dragged him, then lay reposing on his bed,
Leaving the corpse to lie in miry dust outspread.

3

But pitying Phœbus kept pollution far
From Hector, with his Ægis the dead frame
Covering, lest stone or sand the flesh should mar.
So the fierce foe did godlike Hector shame :
Which seeing, the gods took pity on the same,
And bade shrewd Hermes steal the corpse away :
All liked that counsel, save the large-eyed dame,
And Pallas, and Poseidon : only they
Bore malice against Troy, as on the first sad day ;

4

That day when Paris with the immortals chode,
The goddesses who sought his rural stead,
Preferring her who bitter lust bestowed :
Till at the last, when the twelfth morn was red,
Among the blest Apollo sternly said :
“ Hardhearted, all unnurtured, gods, are ye !
Were not your altars erst by Hector fed ?
Yet now his dead cold corpse ye will not free,
For parents, wife, and child, and Trojan folk to see.

5

“ Full soon would they the body, once restored,
Burn in the fire, and due observance pay.
But ye to Peleus’ son your aid afford,
Whose mind is void of right, nor can one sway
The thought within ; for cruel is his clay ;
E’en as a lion, by his own strong heart
Borne on, upon the sheepfold flies for prey,
So hath he pity lost, nor shame hath part
Within him, which to men brings profit and great smart.

6

"In sooth a man may lose some dearer one,
His brother by one womb, or e'en his heir,
Yet will he weep and mourn, and then have done :
For in men's breast Fate puts a heart to bear.
But he, since from great Hector life he tare,
Round his friend's tomb, behind his chariot tied,
Drags him ; far better for himself it were
To pause, for fear, though brave, our wrath he bide ;
For 'tis dumb senseless clay he shameth in his pride."

7

To whom in anger spoke the large-eyed dame :
" Ay, Archer-god, thy judgment should stand clear
Did Hector and Achilleus count the same.
But that was born of human mother dear,
This of a goddess, whom myself did rear
And foster from her birth, and made the mate
Of Peleus, whom we loved, her mortal fere.
Ye all were at the banquet : 'mong you sate
Yon archer with his lyre, the faithless and ingrate."

8

Then answered Zeus, who gathers clouds at will :
" Nay, Hera, frown not at us all on high.
They shall not count the same : yet Hector still
Of those in Troy was dearest to the sky.
For never lacked my altar victim's thigh
Or sprinkled wine, which are the immortals' right.
But steal we not the corpse : 'twere vain to try :
Scant were our chance to 'scape Achilleus' sight,
For, as with mother's care, he guards it day and night.

9

"But let some god call Thetis here to me
To hear my counsel, that her son be plied
To take of Priam gifts, and Hector free."
He spoke: and Iris on the errand hied;
'Twixt Samos' isle and Imbros' rocky side
She plunged into the deep that dashed below.
Loud roared it as she passed beneath the tide,
Plumb as a bullet to the depth doth go,
Fixed to a wild bull's horn, bearing to fishes woe.

10

There Thetis in the smooth bright cave she found,
With sea-nymphs sitting round her: 'mid them she
Was wailing her son's lot, whom Fate had bound
To die at Troy, far from his own countree:
So, standing near, spoke Iris, swift to flee:
"Thetis, arise: Zeus doth thy presence crave."
And silver Thetis answered mournfully:
"Why calls he me, dread lord? I scarce may brave
The looks of heavenly eyes, for endless grief I have.

11

"Yet will I go: his words may ne'er be vain."
Speaking she took a mantle dusky-dyed
And donned it: ne'er was weed of darker grain.
So went she forth, with Iris for her guide,
Upward: and round them parted the sea-tide:
They mount, and soar aloft to heaven's wide space;
There found they Zeus; and round him on each side
Were seated on their thrones the immortal race:
Down at Zeus' side she sate: Athene gave her place.

12

A golden cup to her did Hera reach
With soothing words: she quaffed it and resigned:
And the gods' sire and men's first uttered speech:
"Thou com'st to heaven, fair Thetis, vexed in mind
By cureless grief: I know it, nor am blind.
Yet for what cause I sought thee I will say:
Nine days hath strife disturbed the immortal kind
About thy valiant son and Hector's clay;
And Hermes they had urged the corpse to steal away.

13

"Yet rob I not Achilleus of his meed,
Homage and love preserving still for thee.
Haste, seek the camp, and speak to thy brave seed:
Tell him the gods are wroth, and most in me
Doth choler burn against him, for that he
Keeps Hector at the ships unransomèd,
If he will hear me, and set Hector free:
And to the ships old Priam shall be sped,
To heal his soul with presents, and redeem the dead."

14

So he: nor Thetis slighted his behest:
Down from Olympus with a spring she hied,
And came to her son's hut, where sore distress
She found him, while his friends about him plied
Their zealous care, the banquet to provide.
A fleecy sheep was roasting in the flame
Which their own hands had slaughtered. At his side
Sat gently down the goddess, honoured dame,
And stroked him with her hand, and spake, and breathed his
name:

15

"My son, till when wilt thou bemoan thee so,
Eating thy heart, forgetting food and bed? .
Not long shall I behold thee here below,
For Fate and Death are hovering o'er thine head.
Now hear me: on Zeus' errand I am sped:
He saith the gods are wroth, and mostly he
Hath rage against thee, for that Hector dead
Thou keepest at the ships, nor sett'st him free.
Come now, a ransom take, and let the body be."

16

Whom answering, swift Achilleus made reply:
"Let some one fetch the dead and ransom bring,
If 'tis indeed the will of Zeus on high."
So mother and son within the vessels' ring
Each with the other held their communing;
While Zeus bade Iris hasten from heaven's seat:
"Iris, begone with speed to Priam king;
Bid him his dear son ransom at the fleet,
And take Achilleus gifts, which may allay his heat."

17

"Let none go with him, save a herald old,
To guide the mule-car and bring back the slain:
No fear of death be his, but be he bold,
For Hermes as his convoy we ordain
To lead him, till Achilleus' hut he gain.
But when he sees the face of his great foe,
Himself shall spare him, and the rest restrain:
For no fierce madman is he, well we know,
But to a suppliant wight will grace and mercy show."

18

He spoke : and Iris sped to make report
At Priam's house, where wail and woe she found.
The sons about their father in the court
Sat weeping sore : the old man, closely wound
In tight-drawn robe, lay muffled, and around
Neck and hoar locks much mire and dung were spread,
Which his own hands had gathered from the ground ;
While daughters and sons' wives their sorrow shed,
Thinking of those they loved, the many valiant dead.

19

By Priam stood Zeus' herald, and bespake
With gentle words low breathed into his ear,
While as with palsy all his limbs did quake :
"Take courage, Dardan Priam, nor have fear :
I seek thee not on errand heavy and drear,
But with kind thoughts : Zeus sent me on my way,
Who, though far off, pities and holds thee dear :
He bids thee ransom thy loved Hector's clay,
And take Achilleus gifts that may his heat allay.

20

"Let none go with thee, save a herald old,
To guide the mule-car and bring back the slain :
No fear of death be thine, but be thou bold,
For Hermes as thy convoy we ordain
To lead thee, till Achilleus' hut thou gain.
But when thou seest the face of thy great foe,
Himself shall spare thee and the rest restrain :
For no fierce madman is he, well we know,
But to a suppliant wight will grace and mercy show."

21

Thus Iris spake, and all at once was gone :
Uprose the king, and bade his sons prepare
The mule-drawn car, and fix the basket on,
While he went down into the chamber fair,
Cedarn, high-roofed, where many treasures were,
And called his wife within, and did entreat :
“ Good wife, one came but now Zeus’ word to bear,
Bidding me ransom Hector at the fleet,
And take Achilles gifts which should allay his heat.

22

“ Come, tell me how to thee this thing doth show :
For me, I feel strange motions of mine own
Through the wide army to the ships to go.”
He spake : and she made answer with a moan :
“ Ah, where have fled the wits that made thee known
’Mid stranger folk and those beneath thy reign ?
How dar’st thou venture ’mid the ships alone
Seeking his face, whose bloody hands have slain
Thy many sons and brave ? of iron is thy heart’s grain.

23

“ For if he catch and see thee with his eyne,
That false and faithless savage, pity none
Nor reverence will he feel for aught of thine.
No ; sit we and apart bewail our son :
For Fate ordained, when first his thread she spun,
That fleet-foot dogs for him their fangs should whet
In the house of that fierce man, that violent one,
In whose mid liver I fain my teeth would set
And gnaw it : that at last were quittance of his debt.

24

"For not in flight he slew our Hector dear,
But for Troy's sons and daughters in the fray
Valiantly standing, without thought of fear."
To her made answer godlike Priam grey:
"Check not my wish to go, nor on my way
Screech like ill bird: I may not heed thee, I:
For if some other man had said that say,
Prophet, or priest, or kenner of the sky,
Deaf ear we well might turn, and hold it for a lie:

25

"Now, for I saw the goddess eye to eye
And heard, I go, nor thwart the heavenly will:
And if my fate is at the ships to die,
So be it: that instant let Achilles kill
Me, having clasped my son, and wept my fill."
He said, and oped the coffer's beauteous door;
Thence took he out twelve mantles wrought with skill,
Twelve single cloaks, carpets as many more,
As many goodly rugs, and tunics in like store.

26

Then weighed he ten gold talents and brought forth:
Two gleaming tripods, caldrons four he bare,
And a rich goblet of surpassing worth;
The Thracians gave it when he sojourned there
On mission sent; e'en that he did not spare,
Eager to loose his son: and tauntingly
He drove the Trojans from the cloister fair:
"Hence, blots and scandals! have ye not, e'en ye,
Griefs of your own at home, that ye come troubling me?"

27

"Seems it to you but little, this distress
Zeus lays on me, to lose my bravest boy?
Yet know ye shall and feel it ne'ertheless:
The foe shall find you easier to destroy,
Now he is dead who was my strength and joy:
But may I in Death's house my grey hairs hide,
Ere sacked and pillaged I behold my Troy!"
He spake, and drave them with his staff aside:
Forth from the court they rushed, by that stout menace plied.

28

Then called he to his children, Helenus,
Paris, and Agathon, that godlike knight,
Polites, Pammon, and Deiphobus,
Antiphonus, Hippothous, Dius wight;
These nine he chode with words of scorn and spite:
"Haste, shamers of your father, every one!
Would all in Hector's place had died in fight!
O me unhappy! many a valiant son
Was born me in wide Troy, but Fate hath spared me none.

29

"Mestor I had, and Troilus, and divine
Hector, a god 'mongst men; nor seemed his web
Woven of mortal but immortal line:
Of these fell Ares hath my home bereft:
And nought but dregs of that spilt wine are left,
Dancers and liars, skilled with their feet to play,
Who of our lambs and kids make public theft.
Why yoke ye not the car without delay
And put these things thereon, to set us on our way?"

30

He said : they, fearing, dragged the mule-car out,
New fashioned, and thereon the basket tied ;
Then from the peg took down the yoke so stout,
Of boxen wood, with knob and ring supplied.
A band, nine cubits long, they next provide,
Then place on the pole's end the yoke so strong,
Loop to the nail the ring, and on each side
Thrice bind about the knob the length of thong,
Twine it in closest coil, and 'neath it turn the tongue.

31

Now from the chamber the rich gifts they bare
And stowed them in the car, of Hector's head
The priceless ransom : then they yoked the pair,
The mules with sturdy hoof, to harness bred,
The Mysians' gift : last 'neath the yoke they led
The steeds for Priam, which in the fair stall
With his own hand the old king groomed and fed :
And the twain yoked them in the stable tall,
The herald and the king, old men and wise withal.

32

Then up came Hecabe, her heart all woe :
The honeyed wine in golden cup she bore,
That they might make libation, and thus go :
And she spake out, standing the steeds before :
“ Here, make to Zeus libation, and implore
Safe journey from the foe, since on thy way
Thou needs must go, though I withstand thee sore :
Then to the lord of clouds, Kronion, pray,
Who from his throne on Ida doth all Troy survey :

33

“Ask him to send an omen on the right,
The messenger he loves, whose strength is best,
That thou thyself mayst mark it with thy sight,
And front the journey with a bolder breast.
If not, I bid thee not on this thy quest
Go to the Achaian ships, how fain soe'er.”
Whom godlike Priam answering thus addressed:
“Good wife, I say not nay unto this prayer:
’Tis meet to lift up hands to Zeus, if he may spare.”

34

He spake, and to a bondmaid gave command
Upon his hands to pour the unsullied wave.
Straightway she stood beside him, in her hand
The pitcher and the ewer, wherewith to lave.
He washed, and took the cup his consort gave:
Then, standing in mid court, looked to heaven’s height,
And made libation, and his boon did crave:
“Zeus, Father, throned on Ida, first in might,
Bring me to Peleus’ son, and grace me in his sight:

35

“And on the right thy bird of augury
Send me, thy favourite bird, whose strength is best,
That I myself may see it with mine eye
And front the journey with a bolder breast.”
Praying he spoke: Zeus hearkened to his quest,
And sent a bird, the luckiest feathered thing,
Morphnos and Percnos hight, the small fowls’ pest:
Wide as the chamber-door of some great king,
Fitted with bolt and bar, it stretched from wing to wing.

36

Full on the right it o'er the town did fleet:
They saw it, and their hearts had joy once more.
Quickly the old man clomb the polished seat,
And so drove out from court and corridor:
The four-wheeled wain the mules drew on before,
As wise Idæus drove them: but behind
The horses through the town the old man bore,
Scourged by himself: his friends with grieving mind
Followed him, wailing still, as though to death consigned.

37

So when the town they left and reached the plain,
The others to high Ilion back did go,
Kinsmen and sons: but Zeus observed the twain
In the wide space, and, pitying Priam's woe,
On Hermes, his dear son, did charge bestow:
"Hermes, with man thou lovest to have speech:
Haste now to Priam, and conduct him so
That he may pass the Danaans all and each
Undreamed of and unseen, till Peleus' son he reach."

38

So he: nor Hermes slighted his command:
Swift to his feet he bound his sandals fair,
Of deathless gold, that carry him o'er dry land
Or the moist sea, e'en with the winds of air:
Then took his rod, wherewith he lulls whome'er
He listeth, or awakes the slumbering:
Which holding, straight the mighty Argus-slayer
To Troy and Hellespont his way did wing,
In form a princely youth, in life's first, sweetest spring.

39

But when the twain by Ilus' tomb had driven,
The horses and the mules awhile they stayed,
To drink ; for darkness had o'erspread the heaven :
When lo ! the herald nearing through the shade
Saw Hermes, and to Priam spake, and said :
"Have care, O king ! in sooth is need of care :
A man I see : our graves will soon be made :
Say, fly we on the horses, or make prayer
For mercy at his knees, if he perchance may spare ?"

40

He spake : the old man's mind was dazed with fear :
On his bowed limbs the hair stood all upright :
Trembling he stood : but Hermes, coming near,
His old hand took, and spoke like gentle sprite :
"Whither art driving, father, through the night
Thy steeds and mules, when sleep is made for men ?
Fear'st not the Achaians, terrible in might,
Thy foes, so nigh thee ? shouldst thou meet their ken,
With all that treasure fraught, what thoughts would thine

41

[be then ?]

"Thou are not young ; old is thy camarade
To fend off ill, should any strive with thee :
But I will harm thee not, but lend thee aid
'Gainst other : in thy face my sire I see."
And godlike Priam answered speedily :
"Tis true, my son : yet still of me hath care
Some friendly god, who sends to counter me
A wayfarer like thee, in form so fair,
So prudent : happy they who such a son did bear !"

42

Whom answering, spake the herald Argus-slayer:
"Ay, reverend sir, right well hast thou replied:
But come, now tell me and the truth declare;
Art sending forth these many goods to hide
'Mong other folk, that safely they may bide?
Or do ye all from sacred Ilion fly
In terror, now your bravest chief has died,
Thy son? for with our goodliest he could vie."
And the divine old man in order made reply:

43

"Who art thou, noblest, and what parents bare
One that can speak of my lost son so well?"
And answer made the herald Argus-slayer:
"Of Hector, father, thou wouldst have me tell:
Him have I seen full oft in battle's swell,
As when but now the Danaans he pursued
E'en to their vessels, and in heaps they fell;
While we stood idle, and with wonder viewed;
For fight Achilleus would not, with the king at feud.

44

"His squire am I: one ship conveyed us o'er:
A Myrmidon my sire, Polyctor hight:
Rich is he, and, like thee, now old and hoar:
Seven sons he has: on me the lot did light
To attend my chief to battle: so to-night
Plainward I go: for when day's torch is lit,
The quick-eyed Danaans round the town will fight;
For ill content are they at home to sit,
Nor can the Achaian kings hold in their martial fit."

45

And Priam answered, with the good grey hair :
" If that in thee Achilleus' squire I greet,
Come, tell me now, and all the truth declare :
Still lies my hapless son beside your fleet,
Or piecemeal is he cut, for dogs to eat ?"
And the swift Argus-slayer made speech and said :
" Old sir, he is not dogs' or vultures' meat,
But by Achilleus' ship his corpse is spread
Within the hut unharmed, as when he first lay dead.

46

" 'Tis the twelfth morrow since he there hath lain ;
Yet is his flesh not marred, nor maggots vile
Eat him, which wont to riot on the slain.
Our chief still drags him round his comrade's pile
In pitiless fashion, oft as morn may smile,
Yet harms him not : thyself wouldst sure admire,
How fresh he lies, with nothing to defile,
His blood all cleansed, and closed the wounds so dire
They dealt him : for on him did many slake their ire.

47

" So well the blest ones for thy son provide,
Dead though he is : for dear to them was he."
He spoke : the old man gladdened, and replied :
" Ah, child ! to grace the gods with offerings free,
'Tis good : for ne'er my son, ere life did flee,
Forgot those powers : so bear they him in mind
E'en in death's doom. But take this cup from me :
Shield me, and be my guide, so Heaven be kind,
Till to the hut I come, and there thy chieftain find."

48

To whom replied the herald Argus-slayer :
"Thou tempt'st my youth, good sire, but all in vain,
Bidding me take thy presents, unaware
Of my dread chieftain, for my private gain :
To rob him thus to me were shame and pain,
For fear some ill hereafter should betide :
Yet e'en to Argos I would lead thee fain,
On land or shipboard journeying at thy side,
Nor should man do thee wrong in scorn of such a guide."

49

He said, and mounting on the car with speed
Took lash and reins within his hand of power,
And breathed fresh prowess into mule and steed.
But when they reached the trench and the ships' tower
They found the warders, as at evening hour,
Busied about their meal with care and pain ;
A slumber on them all did Hermes shower ;
The gates he oped, pushed back the bars amain,
And so led Priam in and the rich-laden wain.

50

But when unto Achilleus' hut they came
Which Myrmidonian hands made for their king,
Down cutting boughs of fir, and roofed the same
With grassy thatch, from meadows gathering,
And round it for that prince a mighty ring
Of stakes they made : across the door there lay
A single bar of fir : the enormous thing
Tasked three to fix it, three to lift away,
Of other men : the chief its weight alone could sway.

51

Now Hermes oped it, and dismounting cried :
" Old man, a blessed god thou seest in me,
E'en Hermes, sent from Zeus to be thy guide :
Now I go back, nor shall Achilleus see
My face : for cause of just reproach 'twould be
For gods of mortals to display their care.
But go thou in, and clasp Achilleus' knee,
And beg him by his sire and mother fair
And his one darling child, that thou mayst speed thy prayer."

52

So saying, to high Olympus back did wend
Hermes ; and Priam lighted to the ground,
Leaving Idæus there, who stayed to tend
Horses and mules : the old man, onward bound,
Passed to where bode Achilleus : him he found
There sitting : but his mates were elsewhere :
Automedon and Alcimus renowned,
These only waited : from his evening fare
The chief had newly ceased, and still the board was there.

53

Unseen great Priam entered, and came nigh,
And clasped his knees, and kissed that terrible hand
By which his many sons had come to die.
As one by Até driven, in his own land
Slaying a man, flies to a foreign strand,
To some rich house, and all that see are dazed,
So wondered he as Priam's face he scanned ;
Wondered the rest, and on each other gazed,
While Priam at his knee voice of entreaty raised :

54

“Think of thy sire, man of the godlike brow,
Of years like mine, on age’s threshold drear !
Perchance his neighbours round him even now
Vex him, and none there is to ward off fear :
Yet he, when of thy living he doth hear,
Is glad at heart, and ever hopeth on
Back from the wars to see his offspring dear :
But I am all unhappy : many a son,
Valiant and brave, had I, but Fate hath spared me none.

55

“Full fifty were there when the Achaians came :
Nineteen, the offspring of one womb were they :
Yea, seed I had of many a queenly dame.
But the more part have bowed their knees in fray :
And him, my pride, Troy and the Trojans’ stay,
Thou slewest, for his country battling bold,
Hector : for him I seek the ships to-day,
To treat for ransom, charged with gifts untold.
But thou, reverse the gods, and pity one so old !

56

“Think of thy sire ! I am forlorn yet,
Enforced to dare what none hath dared but I,
To kiss the hand that my sons’ blood made wet.”
He heard, and for his sire was fain to sigh :
Gently he touched, and put the old man by.
So they two thinking, he of Hector dead,
Stretched at Achilleus’ feet, wept bitterly,
While the other mourned his sire, or in his stead
Patroclus : and their groans through all the mansion spread.

57

But when of tears the chief had his desire,
And yearning from his heart and limbs had fled,
He rose, and by the hand raised up the sire,
Pitying the hoary beard and hoary head,
And soothingly bespake him, and thus said :
“ Poor man ! woe’s cup thou to the dregs dost drain.
How dar’dst thou journey all uncomraded
E’en to his face, whose ruthless hand hath slain
Thy many sons and brave ? of iron is thy heart’s grain.

58

“ Come, rise and seat thee : but, for this our grief,
Let it have rest, though smarting : for the chill
Of wintry sorrow yieldeth no relief :
Since for sad mortals thus the blest ones will,
To live in pain, while they are painless still.
Two casks there stand on Zeus’ high palace-stair,
One laden with good gifts, and one with ill :
To whomso Zeus ordains a mingled share,
Now in due time with foul he meeteth, now with fair :

59

“ But whoso gets but ill, that wretch forlorn
Red-ravening Hunger o’er the boon earth’s face
Hounds, and he wanders, gods’ and mortals’ scorn.
So Peleus at his birth the gods did grace
With honour : born to rule a noble race,
He wived a goddess, though of mortal breed :
Yet e’en in his full cup the bale had place,
For in his house grew up no royal seed ;
One child alone is his, to early death decreed.

60

“Nor tend I his grey hairs, since far away
In Troy I sit, a scourge to thee and thine.
But thou of old wast highly blest, men say :
Far as the sun o’er Lesbos’ isle doth shine
To Phrygia’s plains and Helle’s boundless brine,
Thou bar’st the palm for sons and treasure-store.
Now, since the curse hath come by will divine,
Around thy town are fightings evermore :
Yet cheer thee still, nor grieve so sadly and so sore.

61

“For nought ’twill stead thee for thy son to cry,
Nor wilt thou raise him, ere fresh ill thou dree.”
And godlike Priam made thereto reply :
“Give me no seat, dread monarch, while with thee
My Hector lies untombed : but set him free,
That I may see him, and take the gifts we bear ;
Heaven give thee pleasure of them, and make thee see
Thine home again, since thou hast heard my prayer,
And given me to see light, and breathe the genial air.”

62

To whom Achilleus with dark-lowering brow :
“Stir me no more, old man : myself design
To loose thy son : one came from Zeus e’en now,
My mother, offspring of the salt sea brine.
Ay, Priam, I know thee well, some power divine
Hath led thee hither on thy bold emprise :
For no mere man, though of more strength than thine,
Could pass, unchallenged by the warders’ eyes,
Or lightly move the bar athwart our gate that lies.

63

“ So stir not more my heart in my distress,
Lest thee, e'en thee, old man, I fail to spare,
Though suppliant thou, and Zeus' high will transgress.”
He spake : the old man trembled, and was ware.
Then Peleus' son, like lion from his lair,
Sprang straight from out the chamber, of his train
Not unattended : for two squires were there,
Automedon and Alcimus, the twain
Whom most their chieftain prized, after Patroclus slain.

64

The mules and horses loosed they from the yoke,
And to the hut the old king's herald led
And set him on a seat : then out they took
The priceless recompense of Hector's head.
Two mantles left they, round the corpse to spread,
And a rich tunic, meet for his attire.
Then bade he bondmaids wash and oil the dead,
Apart, lest, looking on his son, the sire
In choler should break forth, and rouse Achilleus' ire.

65

Then when the slaves had washed and oiled the dead,
In mantles wrapped, in tunic rich arrayed,
Achilleus raised and placed it on the bed,
Which on the well-wrought wain his comrades laid.
Then, groaning, he bespoke Patroclus' shade :
“ Frown not, Patroclus, shouldst thou hear of it,
That Hector to his sire is given : he paid
No vulgar recompense, the debt to quit,
Whereof thyself shalt have such portion as is fit.”

66

So to his hut went back the godlike man,
And on the seat sat down whence he upstood,
Right opposite, and to the king began :
“ Loosed is thy son, old man, as seemed thee good,
Stretched on his bier : when daylight is renewed,
Thine shall he be : but now be food our care.
E'en bright-haired Niobe took thought of food,
When in her halls lay slain twelve children fair ;
Six daughters, beauteous all, six blooming sons they were.

67

“ These by Apollo's shafts were overthrown,
Those Artemis brought low, in high disdain,
For that with Leto's name she matched her own.
Herself, she said, had many, she but twain :
So by the two the many all were slain.
Nine days they lay in carnage undiscerned,
Nor from man's hand might sepulture obtain,
For Zeus the nation into stones had turned ;
The tenth day, the blest gods entombed them and inurned.

68

“ Yet she took food, when all her tears were shed.
Now in some rocky place, 'mid mountains lone,
In Sipylus, where make the nymphs their bed,
Who by the flood weave dances like a zone,
There broods she on her grief, a cold hard stone.
So, reverend sire, let us for food take thought :
Hereafter thou for thy dear son shalt moan,
Whenso to Ilion thou the corpse hast brought :
For without many tears his grave shall not be wrought.”

69

He spoke, and, rising, a white sheep he slew :
His comrades flayed it and made all complete ;
Deftly they cut it up and spitted through,
And roasted all : Automedon the ground wheat
In baskets served : Achilleus dealt the meat.
At the served food their hands flew eagerly.
But when no more they cared to drink or eat,
Dardanian Priam marvelled much to see
Achilleus as he sat, how like a god was he.

70

Marvelled Achilleus at great Priam too,
To see his goodly mien, his speech to hear.
So then, when each was sated with that view,
First spake old Priam to the chieftain's ear :
" Now let me, gracious prince, in sleep find cheer,
For ne'er have closed the eyelids o'er my eyne,
Since by thy hand was slain my Hector dear :
But without ending still I groan and pine,
Rolling 'mid miry dirt in palace-court of mine.

71

" Now have I tasted food, and black wine poured
Adown my throat : till then I ate no bread."
He spoke : Achilleus gave his slaves the word
'Neath the high cloister to set out the bed,
Heap on bright rugs, and carpets o'er them spread,
And thick-napped mantles place for outer wear.
They, holding torches, from the chamber sped,
And straight set out two beds with studious care :
And swift Achilleus spoke, with raillery in his air :

72

"Sleep there without, old friend, lest from the fleet
Some chieftain come : for oft they sit with me
To hear and tender counsel, as is meet :
And in the night thy face should any see,
To Atreus' son he might report of thee,
And of the ransom yet might be delay.
But tell me now, and answer verily,
How many days wouldst thou the rites to pay,
That I so long may tarry, and my followers stay ?"

73

Answered the godlike Priam thereunto :
"If 'tis thy will that funeral rites we pay,
Thus, Peleus' son, wouldst thou my pleasure do.
Thou know'st the town is closed, and long the way
For carrying wood : for all are in dismay.
Give we nine days to mourning, as is just ;
The tenth, the burial and the banquet day ;
The eleventh, a barrow rear we o'er his dust ;
Then on the twelfth once more to war, if war we must."

74

To whom Achilleus with the godlike face :
"So shall it be, old Priam, as thou hast said ;
For I will hold in war eleven days' space."
So having spoken, a gentle hand he laid
On the old man's wrist, to make him less afraid :
And in the vestibule the twain did rest,
The herald and the monarch, old and staid ;
But Peleus' son slept far within recessed,
Briseis at his side, of fair ones loveliest.

75

All other gods and warrior chieftains slept
The whole night long, soft fanned by slumber's wing :
But not on Hermes that sweet influence crept,
Revolving how to send forth Priam king
From camp, nor risk the warders' challenging :
He stood above his pillow, and thus said :
" Old man, thou reck'st not aught of evil thing :
Spared by thy foe, thou slumberest undismayed.
Well—thou hast loosed thy son, and mighty ransom paid :

76

" But for thy living self a threefold cost
Thy sons should pay, the remnant of thy seed,
If once Atrides knew thee, and his host."
Trembled the old man, and roused his mate with speed ;
And Hermes yoked for them both mule and steed,
And drove them through the camp, unseen, unheard.
But when they came where Xanthus cuts the mead,
Xanthus the gulfy, from Kronion reared,
Then Hermes passed to heaven, and saffron Morn appeared.

77

On to the town they drove with wail and groan :
Their horses, and the mules the body drew
In mournful state : nor was their coming known
Of other man and woman fair to view,
Till that Cassandra, bright with beauty's hue,
Ascending Ilion's tower, her father dear
In the car standing and the herald knew,
And in the wain him stretched upon the bier ;
And straight she shrieked aloud, and spoke for all to hear :

78

“Come, Trojan men and dames, your Hector see,
If e’er when living and returned from fight
Ye hailed him : for his country’s joy was he.”
She spoke : nor in the town stayed living wight,
Woman nor man ; for grief on all did smite.
Beside the gate the funeral wain they found.
First his dear wife and mother hoary white
Sprang to the bier and plucked their locks discrowned,
Embracing his loved head, while crowds stood wailing round.

79

And now all day e’en to the set of sun
Before the gates their sorrow they had shed,
But from the chariot’s seat the king begun :
“Let the mules pass : ye soon shall mourn the dead
To your content, when home he hath been led.”
He spoke : they parted ; and the wain passed on.
The palace gained, they laid him on a bed,
And set beside him singers of sweet tone,
Who chanted ; and the dames accordant made their moan.

80

And first Andromache the wail outpoured,
Holding the lifeless head she loved so dear :
“Fallen art thou in thy prime, my own sweet lord,
And leav’st me widowed : and an infant mere
Is that poor child that blessed us, nor, I fear,
Will he reach youth : for Troy will first be prey
To spoilers, for that thou, her great o’erseer,
Art dead, who wast her wives’ and children’s stay :
And soon in the smooth ships shall they be borne away,

81

"And with them I: and thou, my child, shalt go
To lands where work unseemly thou must do,
Tasked by an unkind master; or some foe
Shall hurl thee from the tower in open view
In wrath, for that his brother Hector slew,
Or son, or sire: for on our soil fell down
By Hector's hand full many of their crew:
For grim in battle was thy father's frown;
Wherefore the people now lament him through the town.

82

"Sad grief thou leav'st to them who gave thee breath,
Hector; but most on me shall sorrow smite:
Thou from thy bed didst stretch no hands in death,
Nor saidst one precious word, whereof I might
Bethink me, weeping, weeping, day and night."
So moaned she: and thereon the dames did moan:
Then Hecabe 'gan wailing, hoary white:
"Hector, of all I bore the dearest one,
Heaven loved thee in thy life, nor doth in death disown.

83

"For of mine other children Peleus' son
Sold whom he caught, beyond the unfathomed blue,
To Lemnos, Imbros, Samos, many a one:
But when that thee with the sharp steel he slew,
Round his slain comrade's tomb thy corpse he drew,
Yet brought him none the more to life again.
Now fresh thou liest and shining as with dew,
Like one whom with the shafts that bring no pain
Apollo's silver bow hath in the chamber slain."

84

So mourned she, and unending wail did start :
And third fair Helen led the dirge and cried :
“ Hector, of brethren dearest to my heart,
For I in sooth am Alexander’s bride,
Who brought me hither : would I first had died !
For ’tis the twentieth year of doom deferred
Since Troyward from my fatherland I hied :
Yet never in those years mine ear hath heard
From thy most gracious lips one sharp accusing word :

85

“ Nay, if by other I haply were reviled,
Brother, or sister fair, or brother’s bride,
Or mother (for the king was alway mild),
Thou with kind words the same hast pacified,
With gentle words, and mien like summer-tide.
Wherefore I mourn for thee and mine own ill,
Grieving at heart : for in Troy town so wide
Friend have I none nor harbourer of good will,
But from my touch all shrink with deadly shuddering chill.”

86

So wailed she : and thereon long groans were heard.
Then Priam thus the people did arede :
“ Now bring in wood, ye Trojans, nor be feared
Of hostile ambushment : for Peleus’ seed,
Sending me from the ships, his will decreed,
Till the twelfth day should dawn, to spill no blood.”
So he : they harnessed ox and mule with speed,
And mustered at the gates their multitude,
And for nine days brought in immeasurable wood.

87

But when at last the tenth bright morrow came,
Strong Hector they bore out with many a tear,
And laid him on the pyre, and set to flame.
Then, when the Morn, rose-fingered, shone forth clear,
The throng came mustering round great Hector's bier :
First with black wine the fire-bed they did soak
Far as the flame had burnt : then brethren dear
The white bones culled, with other friendly folk,
Grieving : and from their eyes the fresh full tear-drop broke.

88

All in an urn of gold the bones they stowed,
And softest purple robes about it wound,
Then placed it in a hollow grave, and stowed
Large stones above it : quickly then a mound
They heaped, while many a sentinel stood round,
Lest on their work half-done the foe should fall :
That raised, they parted, and assembling found
Rich entertainment in the king's great hall :
And so did these appoint brave Hector's funeral.

THE END.

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